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1880*



STRAY LEAVES FROM THE ROAD SIDE.

*ILLUSTRATING COUNTRY LIFE,
STRANGE EVENTS, QUEER FOLK, ECCENTRIC TALES,
ETC., ETC.*

BY

J. T. B.

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Stray Leaves from the Road Side.

FLIRTON CROFT—ITS CHURCH, ETC.

FAIR Flirton Croft ! Upon the uplands found,
By shelt'ring slope of undulating ground,
Where health-inspiring breezes never fail
To spread their influence o'er th' encircling vale—
Near thee, bow'd down by sickness and by pain,
I pitch'd my tent return of strength to gain.
Dull winter past, springtide with blossom gay
Soon put poor health upon improvement's way ;
And ere bright summer came with genial hour,
My feeble frame resum'd its former pow'r.
And say, what strikes a deeper, purer chord
Within a grateful heart than health restor'd ?
When, freed from doubt, anxiety, and fear,
Hope on its golden wing returns to cheer.
As bird releas'd from prison-cage or snare
On lightsome pinion sports on lib'ral air,
So one from sickness rais'd with grateful sight
Beholds creation with increased delight !
With willing steps, and time to call my own,
I soon commenc'd my wanderings alone,
To see the customs in inquiring mood,
As well as beauties of the neighbourhood.

'Twas but four hundred yards from my abode
To Flirton Croft along the old high road ;
A pleasant village, with its one long street
Of varied cottages, and mostly neat,
With tidy villas standing side by side,
A squire's mansion with a prospect wide,
A grand old church, with separate tow'r and spire !
Each in fine form, with features to admire.
And just beyond the churchyard pathway gate
The ancient parsonage preserv'd its state.
Two maiden sisters once, as legends say,
Would build a church—'twas in a ritual day,
Before attacks on screen or candlestick
Confused archbishop's brain, and made it thick ;
Or Church Association (bitter fruit
Of careless days) was form'd to persecute !
Before the Georges, and that chilling time
When all attempts to reach the true sublime
Were shown with common brick, in warehouse style ;
While underneath, to make a Quaker smile,
Capacious cellars, well-design'd, were made
For wine and spirits, to supply the trade !
With "ways and means" these sisters good would raise
A sacred edifice for prayer and praise ;
Both were resolv'd, and with religious fire,
But Rhoda tow'r would have, and Ruth a spire.
With wills determined, and with tempers hot,
Each would consult a favourite swell, some Scott,
Or famous Pugin, Street, or Butterfield,
But neither to authority would yield.
At last, to settle such a sad dispute,
The church was built their separate tastes to suit ;
So, at one end a tow'r its grandeur lends,
And near the other graceful spire ascends.
They call'd one Matthew, and the other John,
And may they there in company hold on,

Like two tried friends, who constantly have been
Near to each other through life's varied scene.
But, they've ne'er met ! and never will, till some
Wild special train perchance their way shall come,
And, mad with speed, now reeling, rolling past,
Crushes their stronghold with terrific blast.
Still let us hope till time shall be no more
Such friends will stand as they have stood from yore.

Ash-Wednesday came ; and with it morning-pray'r
At Flirton Croft—occurrence very rare !
So few obey'd the bell's impressive call
To church and early service ; nearly all
Were of the labouring class, and few, if one,
Had any time that he could call his own.
And men in trade and farmers were so low
In tone, that they to church would never go,
Except on Sunday mornings, now and then,
And most Dissenters were, six out of ten.

Some thirty years ago, 'tis freely said,
No meeting-house had there raised up its head ;
But, since, " Bethesda, Salem, Ebenezer,"
Cum multis aliis—the Church to teaze her—
Have spread around of plaster, brick, and stone,
In form and feature happily their own !
Ash-Wednesday ! and in high back, panell'd pew
Sedately sitting, belfry full in view,
I watch'd old sexton " Clodpole's " giant's form,
In motion like a windmill in a storm,
Working and pulling there, with might and main,
The ancient bell, to make it speak out plain.
Soon was th' approach of clerk and parson heard,
To open service, but no " Clodpole " stirr'd ;
He kept on pulling with a will and power
Enough to send the bell outside the tow'r !
His look so wild, his person so unclean,
He was not fit to be in such place seen.

“Hold!” cried the clerk, in voice denoting rage,
As he was passing by the oak-stained cage
Of Lawyer Squib, who, startled on his seat,
Was nearly forc’d to make a quick retreat.
“Hold, hold!” he roar’d; but “Clodpole” still rang on,
The bell resounding with determined tone.
At last the parson and the clerk got in
Their two square boxes, service to begin;
There raised the latter his excited arms!
There he soon fill’d the parson with alarms,
So he too waved his hand to catch the eye
Of “Clodpole” ringing, whistling, up on high.
At last the clerk, enraged, on mounted stool,
Roar’d out like thunder, “Stop, you stupp’d vool!”
The clap was heard. The parson then began—
As “Clodpole” vanished—“When the wicked man;”
His exit was by quickest movement made,
As if a guilty thing, of light afraid.
To stop such rigs, enforce more decent care,
Much did they want a parish beadle there,
With staff in hand, more punishing than rod
To schoolboy’s back, when his peculiar nod
With threatening look to restless youth in church
Had fail’d to fix him firmly on his perch!
A look which made the noisiest urchin mute,
And shrink with horror into his half boot!
In scarlet cloak, blue cape, with golden lace
Around it bound, the outer man to grace;
And, crown’d with high cock’d hat, he would create
A mark’d sensation by the churchyard gate
On Sunday, when, in pomp and splendour grand,
With courtly bearing there he took his stand.
The service o’er, I met Churchwarden Birch,
Who, *ex officio*, had been led to church!
Stated “how sad to witness such a scene
The sexton and the parish clerk between;”

When Birch attack'd me with extreme delight
"For being a stubborn, thorough Puseyite!"
Name giv'n to all who follow'd one of fame,
Whose useful life no honest man could blame;
Who made the Church throw off its slothfulness,
And brought good order to her services;
Though such was still to Flirton Croft unknown,
As "Clodpole's" conduct and the clerk's had shown!
Now, Lawyer Squib was Churchman sound and true,
But shared reproach like unbelieving Jew.
Were he disposed to cut a little dash,
'Twas done, they said, "with other people's cash."
Could he take holiday, to ease his brain,
"It had resulted from ill-gotten gain."

In church the learned name was never heard
Read from the lessons in the sacred Word,
But some on him would turn a searching eye,
As if the only lost one 'neath the sky,
Or that such lawyer could none other be,
But one of Common Law or Chancery.

Ash-Wednesday service over, with a scene
Which to the mind had most depressing been,
Ere close of day, so promising and fair,
Squib took a stroll to scent the bracing air,
When, passing through some thickly spreading gorse,
The parson's reverend form he came across.
So on they went in company together,
Conversing chiefly on the state of weather;
The prickly shrub reminding Squib with force
To do his best, and use his last resource
To keep from all allusion to Church matters,
Or both might soon become as mad as hatters!
When, in unlucky moment, and in spite
Of all precaution, 'bout black gown and white,
Discussion turn'd, and, ere they'd gone few paces,
They stood and stared with fever-glowing faces.

"And do you mean to tell me," said the vicar,
Word upon word, his temper getting quicker,
"That there is not a preaching-gown, beside
Surplice to read in—service to divide?
Hence, Mr. Squib, quite ignorant I shall
Hold you to be in all things clerical."
"I have no wish to argue, reverend sir,"
Said Squib, "but to your facts I must demur:
Besides, the judges, after much research,
Have well decided by the laws of Church,
That, during morning service, gowns of black
Should not be seen on any parson's back."
"Then I, for one, such law will not obey,"
Rejoin'd the vicar, sharply, "come what may."
"What then," quoth Squib, "do you intend to say,
You, who would punish for supposed excess,
Will heed no rule or order, more or less,
Than what your views and feelings would suggest?
I feel by your remarks with pain oppress'd;
And let me ask you, sir, with humble heart,
Does not the sermon really form a part
Of morning service? Surely this you'll own;
Then what excuse is there for *preaching-gown*?
Besides, directly you the pulpit reach,
You kneel to pray before you stand to preach;
And soon as ever is the sermon o'er,
You offer pray'r as you had done before.
To be consistent, therefore, with your own
Position taken, as is plainly shown,
You should in *pulpit keep on changing gowns*,
Heedless of congregation's smiles or frowns;
The *white* to open and to close with pray'r,
The *black* to preach, or read, a sermon there."
The parson look'd as if he felt his "fix,"
And charged poor Squib with most unworthy tricks,
Declar'd his argument he'd not admit,

" 'Twas special pleading of a Jesuit ! "
And mutter'd, parting with a sudden twist,
" Good evening, sir ; you're quite a Ritualist ! "
Report one day was spread on silv'ry chord,
" The parish church at last to be restored."
A wealthy neighbour had suggested it,
And many fell into a liberal fit.
Subscription lists were very soon display'd,
And to the fund the rector freely paid
One hundred pounds. " Oh, what a gen'rous man ! "
A few would cry : " He just receives per ann.
Eight hundred pounds great tithe ; how good, how kind !
A few like him it will be hard to find."
" Stay, stay," quoth Squib ; " such praise will never do ;
I cannot see it in your point of view.
Look at the chancel ! in so bad a plight
'Twill take four hundred pounds to put it right !
So by this gift he is great gainer, for
Joining the list as a contributor,
He saves his pocket by *some hundred* pounds.
No, no, my friend, I cannot see the grounds
For all the praise you for the rector take.
To me his merit is, he's wide awake ;
And in this view subscribers most agree,
So say no more 'bout liberality ! "
The fine old church outside, with tow'r and spire,
Was grand ; but few its inside could admire,
Except churchwardens of a saving school,
Who whitewash ev'rything by common rule.
Pews it display'd, some shorter and some higher,
Some with red cushions deck'd for nob or squire ;
Some very shaky, needing much repair,
Some quite unsafe the solid weight to bear
Of farmer fit for cattle show or fair !
While most resembled pens for pigs or sheep,
Rough, open boxes of irregular heap ;

Its galleries oft aroused the greatest fears,
Sad were their features—ever view'd in *tiers* !
Design'd they seem'd, like Babel's tow'r, to rise
And reach the firmament beyond the skies !
Oh, mark of human folly or conceit !
As if no pray'r were heard from lowest seat.
Organ it had, in gallery its own,
But to get there the organist was blown !
And all the singers—pretty choiring throng !—
Exalted were, but not to realms of song.
Hard blows for years the edifice had borne,
Its sides by nails gigantic had been torn,
To do the work of pegs, which there had stood
For hats and cloaks, once neatly made of wood.
In short, its whole inside was scarr'd with scratches,
The worse for wear, a thing of shreds and patches.
The vestry-room had been for years unused,
Its site deserted, and its state abused,
Its stone-carved window closed, that none might see
'Twas made a coal-hole, filthy as could be.
The altar ! Often has my heart been pain'd
To see it daily, constantly profan'd !
Pens, ink, and blots in plenty o'er it thrown,
With parish-books—quite free to every one.
While " Clodpole " would at pleasure freely go
Within its sacred bound'ry to and fro.
The pulpit was a structure most sublime,
A grand "*three-decker*" of the olden time ;
Above the reading-desk it stood on high,
Bringing the parson plain to ev'ry eye ;
While over him a sounding-board was spread,
Like some great monster threatening his head ;
A real *three-decker* with a single gun,
It could not carry more at once than one.
But though within the building ev'rywhere
Its form was failing for the want of care,

It was not sinking faster than the flow
Of service there ; oh, that indeed was *low* !
The ten commandments ev'ry Sunday read
At comfortable reading-desk, instead
Of being given from the altar rail,
As rubric orders ; why will many fail
In plainest duty, and make doubt prevail ?
Although from reading-desk on second floor,
'Twas but a few steps to the pulpit door,
The parson march'd the aisle and transepts down
To doff his white and put on his black gown
Behind a pillar's sheltering control,
The vestry being fill'd with coke and coal !
Then march'd, returning, to ascend on high,
And preach his sermon with authority.
Here was a change of *vestments*, without doubt ;
Here were processions grand, both in and out ;
The clerk and sexton prancing on before—
How very dignified the air they bore !
While organ tones of reverence and love
Roll'd through the rafters of the roof above.
O Flirton Croft, how could you act such part,
How closely follow Ritualistic art ?

The parish clerk by years, not labour, bent,
None could complain of as an ornament ;
Slow his responses, much subdued, but then
He still, though out of time, could say " A-men ! "
But, daily getting more infirm and ag'd,
A deputy to help him was engag'd—
A kind of " verger "—one of local fame
And virtue rare—Joe Muddleford by name.
Now Joe was never suited for the post,
But as a *Lib'ral* he had votes the most ;
And having done good service at th' election,
His qualities assumed a new complexion.
So, after *diligent* and *strictest* search,

None could be found more *suited* for the *Church*.
Rebecca Smirk, on duty often seen,
Had to keep floors, and pews, and cushions clean ;
And though her talents might have been superior,
She was not up to keeping the interior
Of such a church, with its proportions great,
In that condition all could call first-rate ;
But she'd enough to do the grand three-decker
Trimly to keep. So much for Miss Rebecca.

CHURCH RESTORATION.

THE church, so quickly failing, to restore
To that fine form which it possess'd of yore,
Subscriptions came with such a lib'ral flow,
The workman's labour soon began to show :
With wills determined, and devoid of doubt,
They quickly turned the building inside out !
And soon where worst of taste had long repos'd,
A nave of grand proportions was disclos'd ;
Each pew and sitting quickly pass'd away,
And lofty gall'ries fell in wild dismay.
'The giant pulpit there, with all its grace,
Stood for awhile the monarch of the place ;
But, doom'd to fall with all its pomp sublime.
O ruthless age ! O cruel hand of time !
The ancient building seem'd to feel relief,
Each noble pillar look'd like some bold chief,
Order proclaiming with improving hand,
Through spacious aisles within his free command.
The architect a man of skill and fame,
Had work to do which would have rais'd his name,
But his employers were both low and tame.

In scraping walls of "freestone" long defac'd
By sickly yellow wash—churchwarden's taste!—
Some scrolls and frescoes were discover'd there.
But, too resembling Popery to spare,
"Out with them, out!" the sentence soon was pass'd;
"Such things on sacred walls must never last.
"To draw attention, or delight the eye,
"What need of relics—of antiquity?
"None should remain, for none should ever see
"Such glaring symbols of the Papacy!"
Beneath the floor were ancient coins found,
Proving that Romans once had held the ground!
And, here and there, a well-marked fossil shell
Show'd that old ocean, with its mighty swell [found?
Might there have roll'd. And, oh! what next was
A human skull, in perfect state and sound,
Of some great man, perhaps! for none could say,
Or empty knowledge-box of "madman gay."
Or of some senator of highest station,
Wild with reform, or liberal education,
Free from religious culture of the mind;
Instruction only of a sec'lar kind
For ev'ry poor man's child throughout the land,
That each might work with head as well as hand.
Yet there was hope this skull to diff'rent sort
Of man belonged—to one of deeper thought;
For when the church was built, as records show,
From six to seven hundred years ago,
Some universities had then been founded,
And youthful mind was with religion grounded.
The workmen star'd, and "would-be learned" said,
"It had no doubt been once a great man's head!
For sure its *size* was *great*." Some thought "a nigger
Once own'd the thing, for it was black and bigger
Than any nob of white man they had seen,
Or else it was done *brown*, or they were *green*."

In short, it puzzled antiquarian eye,
Creating rarest curiosity;
While *one*, look'd up to as a *modern light*,
Felt "very sure it was *pre-Adamite*."
Such learned men in country places oft
Astonish *natives*; so at Flirton Croft
His firm conclusions none would ever doubt,
For most looked on him as the wisest out.
The skull was prized, and to museum sent
In country town! and thus the late event
Which had occurred at Flirton Croft so rare
Would be recorded with the utmost care.
The wonder caus'd by finding of the skull
Had scarcely ceas'd, and ere the church was full
Of workmen, ready duty to fulfil,
Their inmost blood receiv'd the greatest chill,
For shock soon followed with terrific blast
Which made them speechless, looking all aghast.
Forth from the dismal vestry-room a sound
Proceeded quickly, stunning all around,
A storm of horror and a piercing cry
Of some wild act, or worse discovery.
The workmen bolted from the haunted place,
The lusty foreman held in firm embrace
The vicar, who had stagger'd 'gainst the wall,
Where stood a skeleton complete, though small—
Found quite by chance removing stone away,
From certain portions threatened with decay.
The mild Rebecca, sensitive, poor "gal!"
Too near the place, fell down hysterical,
While sexton "Clodpole," speechless, moan'd aloud,
Star'd at a form that ne'er had linen shroud.
All was "confusion worse confounded" there,
And most seem'd driven to the last despair;
When one, recovering faster than the rest,
Went for the doctor with a mind distress'd.

Here was a scene for painter to pourtray,
So many stagg'ring in each other's way!
Dreading "what next" while gazing at a small
And lifeless figure in an old stone wall.
The parish doctor came with rapid pace,
Fearing some accident had taken place,
And soon reported, with decision rare
They were, no doubt, the bones of female fair.
From time to time full rife reports had been,
That such old vestry-room had been the scene
"Of some foul deed committed years ago,
But when or how no living man did know."
While some would say, "Of old a monk would come
On duty, and would make that very room
His home, while he at Flirton Croft would stay
To teach the poor to walk in virtue's way—
The only safe one as the pilgrim's course—
With pow'r to shield it from the Tempter's force.'
And that alone he made that room a snare
For beauteous maiden—who he murder'd there;
Then plac'd her form, with utmost skill and care,
Within a wall of well-cemented stone,
As if the job had been by masons done.
A work of time, and daily labour too,
But what would sinful monk not try to do?
Strange is the fact, but soon this awful scene
Forgotten was, as if it ne'er had been;
And what was said about it proved quite dull
Compar'd to that occasion'd by the skull.
The subject dropp'd, the form was quickly plac'd
Within the wall where it had been incas'd
Some hundred years. To keep it safe in stone
Seem'd useless care; for how could any one
Be harm'd by gentle woman's skeleton?
No men of learning had been call'd to see
So rare and sudden a discovery;

Old bones so perfect, strangely brought to light,
To tell their age, or if *pre-Adamite*.
Soon, and for e'er, 'twas hurried from the view,
As if some there *about the murder knew* !
Workmen return'd !—and, quickly as before,
All did their best the building to restore ;
And soon 'twas finished, grand in form, and bold,
But so severely plain, its look was cold.
Still, as it gives to parish Churchmen room
For holy worship when they choose to come,
The end was gained. And Flirton Croft can boast
As good a church as any 'mong the host
Adorning still, by heavenly grace, our land.
Oh, may it e'er uninjur'd safely stand ;
And may its sacred influence increase,
From age to age, till time itself shall cease !

CHURCH RESTORED.

THE church restor'd—"It is our opening day,"
Officials sang, and bells began to play
An early chime, though somewhat flat and low ;
And clerk and sexton trotted to and fro
In sable suit, the one they kept for best
And funerals, when they were so much distress'd.
Soon came the time for special morning pray'r,
And church was quickly fill'd, the Bishop there ;
The service well perform'd, but rather tame—
For clergy all, by strictest order, came
In plainest garb. No gowns or surplices—
"All must appear in ordinary dress."
No clerical procession. Naught of state
To Bishop even granted ; none to wait

Upon his lordship and his course to grace
But Rural Dean, who look'd quite out of place.
The service o'er, the banquet's moment came,
Luncheon or dinner, differing but in name.
Soon was the schoolroom fill'd with many a guest,
Well were the tables furnish'd, gaily dress'd ;
His lordship's graceful ease adorn'd the chair.
The squire and wife, with many " nobs " were there.
But where the social vicar ? where, O where !
Gone with a " Bob " to try and catch a thief
Who'd brought a kind parishioner to grief—
Made free with Widow Slowberry's side pocket,
Bagging a ten-pound note and silver locket.
Had she but thrown it to the church collection,
It would not have been left for rogue's detection.
But she had given plenty, and was free
Of heart in ev'ry work of charity.
Report soon spread that some strange man, in state,
Had pranc'd through aisles with " bag," or rather
" plate ;"

But such was never clearly ascertained,
And note and locket never were regain'd.
At last the vicar reach'd the banquet hall,
And after grace was said, both great and small—
A motley crew of all denominations—
Pitch'd into victuals rare and choice potations.
Dissenters came, the varied lot to swell,
And they could handle knife and fork right well.
The day to feasting they had sworn to give ;
So Michael Loveday, leading " Primitive,"
And Ebenezer Bolter, foremost " Ranter,"
Soon floor a pigeon pie, and port decanter.
Such worthies seldom fail to take delight
In joining public dinner, or tea fight ;
And if from church funds *given*, naught to pay,
They can be Churchmen for the time or day.

The cloth remov'd, and loyal toasts sent round,
The Bishop's health was pledg'd in words profound,
And all receiv'd it with a hearty will,
Sure that his lordship duty would fulfil ;
Then all the guests arose with "three times three,"
Which mov'd him greatly, as 'twas plain to see.
His lordship, with a voice like soft-ton'd bell,
Responded warmly with the words "All's well ;"
"All, all's serene ! no sign of stormy weather,
Vicar and flock are pulling well together !
And Nonconformists (must I term them so?)
A very favouring disposition show !"
Then "Grubwell" smirk'd as he a bumper took,
With social ease and patronising look ;
While Baptist "Plum" his head in pleasure bent,
With graceful force, for such a compliment.
The Bishop added few kind words, and frank,
"As from his heart he would sincerely thank
All for his health receiving well and drinking ;
He felt the honour much. It set him thinking."
And thus he clos'd his speech, as short as sweet,
And as the guests would cheer resum'd his seat.

Toasts quickly follow'd, common and select,
"The patron, vicar, and the architect,
Church fund subscribers," and, though late, not least,
"The ladies !" ne'er forgotten at a feast.
None "Church and State" propos'd, for most would spare
The *Independent* feeling present there—
While one proclaimed the toast for such occasions
Should be the "*ministers of all persuasions.*"

"Plum," in responding for this *special toast*,
Said, "it had ever been his aim and boast
To live with neighbours free from party strife.
That was the happiest moment of his life ;

And he was grateful, though a wretched sinner,
 For having had that day a right good dinner;
 And, thankful to the *chair* and *other gents*
 For drinking him, and all their compliments,
 Their *Church's* motto was, 'Live and let live,'
 And all his lot would best *examples* give."

How great their self-importance (small their taste),
 How had their presence such a meeting grac'd;
 For church restoring they had little care,
 Unless they could get in the pulpit there,
 And preach their views in spirit of vexation,
 While *meekness* counselling, and toleration.

Some who may read these lines may think them hard
 On well-intention'd men—that more regard
 To neighbour should in charity be shown.
 But much experience cannot fail to own
 That Nonconformists, at least eight in ten,
 Are mostly vain and inconsistent men!
 See how they like distinction to extend
 To them, and to be styl'd the "*reverend!*"
 While they with utmost freedom use the names
 Of Luke and John, of Peter, Paul, and James;
 Remarking how Mark "*this and that*" relates,
 Which well corroborates what "*Matthew*" states,
 As if they were upon the world's broad way;
 Dissenters' guests alone from day to day.
 To call a bless'd "*Evangelist*" a saint
 Savours too much of ritualistic taint.

So each receives respect like "*Jim or Dick*"
 From *pious* Methodists, of "*honours*" sick;
 And yet, as "*preachers of the Word,*" they *claim*
 A title as a handle to their name.

The Bishop had pronounc'd the words "All's well,"
But all the parish feuds none there would tell :
Rows about vestments, gowns of black or white—
Where was the pulpit's proper place ? or site
For organ and the bumptious singing lot ?
Where should the clerk recline, in desk or not ?
Such points and questions boil'd contention's pot ;
While wish to turn a road through some near quarter
Brought the poor vicar into scalding water.

On this great day, school children, boy and gal,
Were all to celebrate the festival !
To share in liberal tea, with buns and cake,
And stuff as much as growing youth can take.

Scarcely had dinner ended, and each toast,
When guests to tea assembled in a host,
And many a child of ripe and older growth
Sat at the tables firmly, nothing loth
To fill the seats allotted for the young.
How small their chance a greedy lot among !
The worst arrangements (better none at all)
Caus'd great confusion in the festive hall.
Attending friends and waiters found no space
To move about, and tea ne'er reach'd its place ;
And bread and butter, buns, and cake went flying,
Now here, now there, 'mid longing children crying,
Squeez'd, disappointed, hungry, and dismay'd,
While frocks were torn, for the occasion made.

Some folks far'd well, and many an ancient " gal,"
Like Sally Potts, " a Congregational,"
And as to ranting " Susan Thimblewhite,"
Her perch she kept and pegg'd away till night ;
While mother " Sidebottom," at times a preacher,
Stuff'd herself sick—an " Independent creature !"

In vain a neighbouring parson, one "Packtight,"
Essay'd to speak, and tried with all his might,
But pow'r and eloquence was all no go.
The course of tumult, with increasing flow,
Swept like a torrent or a whirlwind storm.
In vain he stood upon a schoolroom form,
Conspicuous there, that haply he might soothe
The noisy throng, and soften down and smooth
The way for his prepar'd address to those
Of tender years, before the scene should close.
Yet disappointment waited on his will,
Nothing could keep the excited party still.
So, just like church within the parish border,
Little was done in decency and order.

At length the day arrived for that great work,
Allotting seats ! and many proved the "Turk."
Most had opposed all open seats and free,
Though Flirton Croft was e'er for liberty !
And fixing them where pews had been display'd
A bitter feeling never since allay'd.
No fierce Mahomedan or Arab chief
Could be more mad when rudely brought to grief
Than were some church-restor'd rich worshippers,
Madam and Miss, with half-bred Squires and Sirs.
And was it not enough to drive them wild,
After they'd been by notice *soft* beguil'd
To meet within the sacred walls, and there
"Select their seats," and then find all unfair ?
For soon as doors were open'd plain 'twas seen
That favoured few had there beforehand been.
Firm on the desks or forms, with pin or nail,
Was fix'd a card, so that it could not fail
To tell to all that Mrs. A. or B.
Had seats secured, or Mr. Nobody ;
And this performed in stealth before the day

For all to meet in a considerate way,
Within the sacred house of peace and pray'r,
Places to choose in proper order there.

Old Mrs. Gubbins " could not understand
Why she, who own'd a house and freehold land,
With pew annex'd, and which had long been held
By her own family, should be compell'd
To give it up at little or no warning,
Because some folk are weak 'bout church adorning.
Why she should lose her property and rights
To please a silly few, miscall'd, new lights.
Why lose for e'er on Sunday afternoon
Her ease and comfort in her pew as soon
As sermon got too long, and much too prosy,
And she felt rather dull and very dozy?
And why should not her sittings thenceforth be
Near where her old pew stood? Right's right!" cried
she.

" But sure 'twas wrong, because some parties gave
Money to beautify an aisle or nave
(And quite new comers), they should have full share
Of sittings, while they shoved her anywhere."
Gubbins, no doubt, had grounds for all she said,
And many growl'd, while disaffection spread.

" Ben Boreman " lost his old and oblong pew,
Incas'd by flannel of autumnal hue,
With cushions, scarlet cloth, and nearly new—
A birthday present from his own " two-thirds,"
With lisp of love too sweet to give in words.
" Why should he not," he said, " in dwindling life
Have a snug sitting by his darling wife?
Why not a curtain, too, supported by
Rods of fine brass, to shut out wand'ring eye,
And mark the spot where one of ancient race

Sits in the chancel in his proper place.
 He an "aggriev'd parishioner," as well
 As "Nancy Gubbins," made his feelings tell !
 Storm'd the churchwardens, scared the gentle vicar,
 Threat'ning the Law, and so the storm grew thicker.
 Was it because he had not given much
 To restoration fund he should in such
 An offhand way be left to find a seat ?
 "All," he maintain'd, "was artful dodge complete."

Old "Hammerton," retirèd auctioneer,
 "Thought that the treatment he receiv'd was queer.
 To say the least, the seat assign'd to him
 Would hardly hold a chap with figure thin ;
 And as to squeezing him to squat down there,
 Was most indecent, anything but fair.
 Besides, it was so near main entrance door,
 'Twould give him rheumatiz, or quinsey sore.
 Why, too, place one of his advanc'd position
 Among his neighbours of a low condition ?
 Promise was made all sittings should be free.
 How came it, then, that only two or three
 Remain'd for choice when the appointed day
 Arriv'd for just selection and *fair* play ?
 Why should young 'Newcome,' with his family small,
 Have seats to spare, and 'Longstaff' none at all ?—
 An old ratepayer, with five growing lads,
 Their frames as strongly built as their old dad's,
 All six feet two and over ! bold as high !
 Like famous giants of antiquity—
 A friendly lot ; but when their monkeys rise
 Churchwarden Birch should make a move that's wise.
 Resign his post ere tumult grew too thick,
 And he be forc'd in haste to '*cut his stick.*' "

"John Styles," a Yeoman and a Christian true,
 Beneath the pulpit held a cosy pew.

One where his fathers sat in days of yore—
A crib to sleep conclusive, and a snore.
But both have vanish'd to return no more,
And "Styles" looks when he takes his seat in church
Like strange cock-sparrow on a lonely perch !
He "to such working men would not sit near,"
"As 'Sotwell,' redolent of gin and beer,
'Dog's nose,' once call'd, when four-horse coaches plied
On every high road with becoming pride ;
Nor by 'Phil Windus,' with complexion sallow,
Scented so much with verdigris and tallow ;
Nor close to where poor 'Molly Pilgrim' sits,
So very subject to strong falling fits.
Treatment like this for him would never do,
He'd have good seats in place of his old pew,
Or else he would, with all his party, go
To church elsewhere, and never more would show
Their forms at Flirton Croft on Sunday morn,
From which since 'restoration' they'd been torn."
This threat he kept, and left (is't not a shame ?)
His parish church ! Say, who should bear the blame ?

Churchwardens and authorities declar'd
They'd serv'd no private end, and only car'd
To do their duty ; "favour and affection
Never allow'd to thwart a fair selection."
But this was all delusion and a snare,
Their friends and "toadies" got another's share.
So while pew-holders privileges lost,
Others found sittings who'd subscrib'd the most
Church to restore ! And though all seats were free—
At least so call'd—still money privately
For them was freely by *subscription* paid ;
And small contributors were victims made,
Forc'd to a place, if any could be got,
Left vacant by the highly favour'd lot.

Thus do we see, on life's eventful way,
That money seldom fails to win the day ;
And though full just may be our claims and wishes,
He who's most interest gets the "loaves and fishes."

THE SCHOOL.

THE schoolhouse well deserves descriptive skill,
But I lack pow'r to give it—not the will.
'Twas built some time before the world went mad,
'Bout making "*scholars*" of each lass and lad !
The building was of simple, neat design,
And with some taste would usefulness combine.
Spacious and high, 'twas th'roughly ventilated,
And in the healthiest quarter situated.
But school commissioners, with utmost vigour,
Resolv'd the edifice should be much bigger !
The *parish paid* ! and if it could appear
In their report at close of ev'ry year,
The great amount of labour they'd got through,
'Twould place them well before the ratepayers' view,
And show the public it was right that they
Should be employ'd and kept on liberal pay !
State education, knowledge for the poor !
For ev'ry social ill the "perfect cure."
And say, is't found they turn out better men
Than when each child was taught commandments ten,
And Church of England catechism plain
Was best instruction for the infant brain,
By wise command at ev'ry parish school,
And all in heart obey'd the golden rule ?
Religious truth in this enlighten'd day
Can still be taught ; but all may keep away

From such essential learning, if they are
Well prim'd and cramm'd with all that's secular !
Now each young child, no matter if its brain
Be strong or weak, its livelihood to gain
Must learned be. Would not our grandsires stare,
Could they return to earth some morning fair
To see what training infant mind must bear ?
Minds of the poor, who soon by sweat of brow
Must work for daily bread by loom or plough,
And in the varied ways of land and sea
Work with a hearty will and industry.
Each tender urchin now, though miles full four
Its home may be from village schoolhouse door,
Must hasten there, and with a willing mind
Of parents, or they will be surely fin'd !
Whate'er the kind of weather at the time,
Or wet, or cold, in this uncertain clime,
See the poor brats on bleak December day
Beating in scanty suit the rough highway !
With chilblains raw on finger and on toe,
As they attempt to run o'er slippery snow,
Some warmth to gain, regardless of disaster,
Their little noses sore, and running faster
Than cramping feet, which feel inclin'd to freeze
As oft they tumble on their hands and knees !
With tears congeal'd on faces chapp'd and blue,
Or rather of an unripe mulberry hue—
Rare studies for zoology !—at last
They reach the schoolhouse gate when noon is past.
Oh, ponder well, ye Radical M.P.'s,
Who have some darling theory to please ;
Advancing spirits of a restless age,
Who fain would blot out hist'ry's brightest page,
Before you strain your wits to frame an Act
That will not work although it may attract :
Would you have lik'd, before you took your seat,

To go to school by force in snow or sleet,
And learn your work, perhaps with frozen nose ;
If not with worn-out boots and little clothes ?
Instruct the poor ! Let learning spread around ;
But draw your " bills " on principle that's sound.
No " samplers " now are seen in parish schools—
Things of an age gone by, " an age of fools ! "
Sewing and stitching may at times be taught,
And " whipping," but that's nearly come to naught.
Now all is done to cultivate the mind,
And customs good and old are cast behind ;
Hence all must learn the way to " Timbuctoo,"
To " Tinnivelly," " Pekin," or " Peru ! "
All must in arts and sciences be taught,
To know how iron's made and steel is wrought ;
And ev'ry labouring lad must well define
The true equator, equinoctial line ;
The longitude and latitude must make
(Though soon the latter he will quickly take) ;
Explain why certain plants at midday shut,
And milk will get into the cocoa-nut ;
Describe the heav'nly orbs, and how the host
Of stars appear ; no more in wonder lost,
Must prove how surely Mother Earth will run
In fond attraction daily round her sun !
And what there must for ever be between us
And Him, besides the transit of Miss Venus.
Now ev'ry forward, self-conceited lass,
Though born and bred up in the servant class,
May learn at school to draw with pencil fine
The landscape pleasing, " human form divine ; "
To play the piano too (they all can dance),
And how to speak with ease the tongue of France.
With knowledge stor'd to such a high degree,
What will the natives of Great Britain be ?
Models of wisdom, usefulness, and worth

To ev'ry other nation upon earth.
Still I believe, should such new schools abound
Without religious culture pure and sound,
An end will surely come to Church and State ;
And soon the latter, yielding to its fate,
Will fail, and fall in rapid strides away,
Before confusion's desolating sway.

How sad the thought, that long neglect to sow
The only seed from which a crop could grow
To full perfection for that harvest-home
When time shall cease, has been allow'd by some ;
That weeds o'er which reflecting minds must weep
Prevail instead—which angels will not reap,
But bind in heaps and thoroughly secure,
To burn as waste with ev'rything impure.
And are not other places known to fade,
Like " Flirton Croft," for want of vigorous aid ;
With ample means, yet little duty giv'n
To scatt'ring folds by worst of influence driv'n ?
And may not facts as these have been the cause,
If not the chief one, of our present laws ?
Can it be strange that any should grow wild
With some religious fancy, when a child
No godly seed receiv'd or best of care
To guide it safely from the tempter's snare ?
Sad when well-meaning pastors *will but* preach,
And see no need secluded homes to reach
Of untaught poor. What wonder they should go
To Ranters' meetings, where they ne'er can know
The Church's history, doctrines, or belief,
The sinner's soul to save from endless grief.

If in the past but little time's been giv'n
To teach the poor the only way to heav'n,
To bring religion to the cottage door,
Seize on the present ! Let neglect no more
Be seen or heard of. Snatch the fleeting hour,

To give the feeble soul the only pow'r
That can from Nature's dark and evil way
Preserve it safely for eternal day.
Seize it ; for, as in Flirton Croft, but few
Know aught of Church, or of its hist'ry true ;
And many dwelling over wide expanse
Are left, alas ! in total ignorance.
So may there be some other districts found
Of this proud land in heathen darkness bound.

CHARITIES.

Too many must have notic'd with surprise
How much abus'd are local charities !
Time's ever-changing and mysterious course
Giving to some a very different force
From what their founders' generous hearts intended,
So few by them are aided or befriended.
At Flirton Croft, 'mong benefactions there
To aid the poor, an ancient one, most rare
In this our day, doth with abuse exist,
The worst of bounties on a curious list.
A kind old man, some centuries gone by,
Gave certain fields to found a charity ;
And, by his will, declar'd the rents should be
Giv'n on " Good Friday " anniversary
To all poor folks who church had well attended,
And ne'er had vicar for the time offended ;
And who on that bless'd morning should be seen
In Sunday best, at service, neat and clean !
Thus 'twould appear the kind testator meant
His bounty for the really indigent ;
And only for the Church of England people,

Sure as their parish had both tow'r and steeple.
Good proof of this does very plain appear ;
For, forty years ago, not in or near
The village bounds was there a "schism shop,"
In door of which could erring mortals pop !
Proof, too, alas ! that means have not been found
To keep the enemy from taking ground—
And plain the fact to reasonable mind
That Nonconformist had not slightest kind
Of claim to share the charity, and yet
A full proportion regularly met
Good Friday morn in church, and there partake
Of alms dol'd out—*and for devotion's sake !*
Such an abuse made me and others stay
At home from service on that holy day ;
For churchyard gates, assail'd by noise and stir,
Look'd like the entrance of a theatre.
And nave and aisle were always nearly full
Before the sexton had commenc'd to pull
The bell inviting all to house of pray'r,
To kneel and supplicate for mercy there.
Some would drop in with loud and heavy tread
While solemn pray'rs and litany were read,
In dirty smocks, from field and farmyard near,
Perfum'd with smoke, and scented with small beer,
Casting around a strange and awkward leer.
The little conscience they possess'd cried, "Shame !"
For no one doubted why to church they came.
Some scrambl'd in full late to swell the scene,
To show that they within the church had been
Ere service clos'd, or they would get no pence—
To all religious feeling an offence !
The parson follow'd those who'd gone before,
And lost no time, the morning service o'er,
To deal the bounty to the flock around ;
Which as it reach'd to more than twenty pound,

In shilling pieces and in sixpences,
The time 'twould take to give it was mere guess.
Arrangements had with caution been design'd
To keep a gathering of so rough a kind
In some approach to "decency and order"
While passing through the church's inner border.
But oh, how futile thought or greatest care!
All was confusion—all distraction there.
There men and women struggl'd on and crush'd
Others in front, and violently push'd
To reach the vicar, seated at his post
By chancel door, as, one by one, the host
Of greedy labourers and paupers pass'd
To grasp the tin in hand, and hold it fast.
Some would squeeze through the backs of seats to save
A few short moments' pacing up the nave
With some respectful, orderly old folk,
Who would not dream within the church to joke;
While some leapt over seats in furious pace,
As if at "steeple" or at "hurdle" race.
The squire and brother magistrate stood by
Somewhat surpris'd, though, with accustom'd eye,
They both "had interests to guard most dear;"
And, as election might be drawing near,
"Why," thought each one, "should I be the beginner
To mend the ways of '*publican* or sinner'?"
At last both bad and good left chancel door,
And church regained tranquillity once more.
But why the church with such a concourse fill,
To share the bounty of a good man's will?
He ne'er had said, "Dispense in such a place;"
Then why not use the schoolroom's ample space?
The rougher parties *there* could but offend
Those whom strict duty bound their aid to lend.
Beside the number who had proper claim
Upon the charity, too many came

To take their shilling from the vicar's hand
Although they could good weekly wage command;
And several were allowed a "bob" to take,
As old inhabitants, for "friendship's sake."
So my old gardener, who was well-to-do,
Like many others of his class, a "screw,"
Secur'd some poor deserving neighbour's share
"Hard up and push'd." Jim Graball did not care.
'Twas quite a sight upon Good Friday morn,
To see how many would the paths adorn
That led to parish church. Though some lived near,
They only went there once in ev'ry year,
But would have gone each Sunday, fast and willing,
Had they been sure of pocketing a shilling.
How many pac'd across the village green
Who looked like strangers, there so seldom seen!
They may have liv'd o'er rough and distant road,
And had but little heard of "house of God."
Many had health, and could exertion bear,
Yet rarely went to any place of pray'r,
But idly spent their Sunday, as it came,
In "pitch and toss," or far more wanton game.
No pastor sought their homes remote and lone,
Time hurried by, as it had ever done,
As if one span (when toiling hours were gone)
Of uselessness. No influence came with break
Of Sabbath day, their senses to awake
From worldly slumber and the things of night,
To thoughts of heaven and the realms of light.
Well-meaning giver, had it crossed your mind
That such recipients would your bounty find,
Would you have not preferr'd the land to give
To some poor friend, if not to relative?
The money given, quickly went to fill
The nearest taproom's never-failing till!
And guests, till night had closed that holy day,

At public-houses threw the "alms" away.
 I tried my best with some, well known to be
 Possess'd of influence and authority,
 To get improvement in the charity!
 But none had moral "pluck" enough to face
 Opponents who would use throughout the place
 Their pow'r 'gainst all who dar'd to interfere
 With liberty of subject, *and of beer*.
 At last the vicar, sad with the abuse,
 "Thought a few words from him would be of use;
 And if from pulpit forcibly convey'd,
 It might, by some recipients, be obeyed."
 He was, in truth, a preacher, very far
 Above the average, and was popular.
 So soon as he the pulpit high ascended,
 And many present to his words attended,
 "'Beware of covetousness' shall be my text,"
 In telling voice—how many look'd perplex'd;
 And all who had throughout the time of pray'r
 Made noise enough, and did not seem to care:
 While the good parson would expound and preach,
 You might have heard a pin the flooring reach,
 Till he exclaim'd, in accents firm and loud
 (Causing a murmur through the list'ning crowd),
 "Tell me, ye strangers, tell, what come ye for?
 I must repeat th' important question o'er!
 What brought you here in numbers on *this* day?
 Was it with any real desire to pray?
 Was it to join good neighbours in that act
 You came so freely, and are now so packed?
 Know ye, that money cannot lead you straight,
 However great the sum, to heaven's gate?
 What brings you here, with footsteps light and willing?"
 When one roared out, "Why, sir, the shilling!
 Which, if we did not come here for, *no* doubt,
 We should not get, and have to go without!"

This "stump" the vicar, and he look'd around
In silent wonder and in thought profound;
Plainly disclosing how he felt the force
Of such "reply." His eloquent discourse
Wisely he clos'd; no words of his could mend it.
His course was clear; 'twas surely best to end it.
Thus clos'd "Good Friday" service! and with pain
I think next year it may return again!
With all the pow'rs now vested by the State
In paid commissioners. Abuse so great,
Existing now as flagrant as before,
Shows there is much that's "rotten at the core!"

STEPHEN HUNTER.

ONE early morn, with promise bright and fair
Of corn well ripen'd, an abundant share;
To parish bounds remote, with willing mind,
I turned my thoughts, the lonely poor to find—
Those who attract no sympathetic eye
Of neighbour, oft their dwelling passing by.
Soon o'er the highway, through the village green,
Struck with the prospect from the upland seen,
Old "Lily," setter, thoroughbred and hale,
At heel attending with a wagging tail,
With cheerful heart on goodly errand bound,
I took my way upon descending ground;
By waving crops and hedgerow paths along,
Charm'd with the echoes of the skylark's song;
Down shelter'd lane, or bridle-way at best,
Where timid philomel might build her nest:
A lengthy course, with oft on either side
A sudden curve its terminus to hide,

Or to entice on his uncertain way
The rambler on with expectation gay.
The name it bore was "Hogsback;" why, none knew,
Except that there the stiffest brambles grew.
At last, its end arriv'd at, once again
I found the cheering view of golden grain.
Across a parish road, by narrow plot
Of common, stood old Stephen Hunter's cot;
A mud-wall'd tenement, antique and wild,
Its architecture "Early English" styl'd.
Far from the village tap and beer-house door,
Where grog and swipes entice the neighbouring poor.
Far from the "Angel's" stores, where ready feast,
With "entertainment good for man and beast,"
Was found for all, and where one oft could see,
The greatest beast in human kind to be.
Remote from these, and in so calm a scene,
Old Stephen's home the happiest might have been.
Close by his garden gate the old man stood,
Who met me gladly in respectful mood,
Touch'd a tall hat, or which had once been so,
When first design'd, some fifty years ago;
But now well batter'd by the effect of clime,
Or, like its owner, by the hand of time.
Hat, that belong'd to famous post-boy days,
When many travell'd by the road in chaise;
White, with a yellow hue, like butter-milk,
Sometimes of beaver made, sometimes of silk;
And this one Stephen kept with miser care,
The gift of early friend or neighbour rare.
Straight was his figure, wiry yet his frame,
His manner free and manly, spirit game,
His stature somewhat under middle height,
His legs the best of bone with sinews tight;
And though his "innings" number'd seventy-two,
He look'd as if he still could well get through

A fair day's work, could he get work to do.
"Good morn," said I. "Good day, zir," he replied.
Invited then to see his cot's inside,
I enter'd, and in ceremony plain,
He introduc'd me to his "Sarah Jane."
Dingy the dwelling, cheerless, low, and bare,
'Twas plain no comfort could be lurking there,
If even daily necessary fare.
"Lone," I remarked, "but, oft from gen'rous home
No doubt the hand of charity hath come ;
The parson, too, by sacred duty led."
When, with emphatic gesture, Stephen said,
"No parson, zir, has darken'd that old door
For fifteen years or zo ! it might be more.
One we had then of good old English sort,
Who never flinch'd the ready cash to sport.
Methinks I often hear him zay, ' My friend
I hope that this odd zixpence won't offend.'
His tender heart and hand were ever near
To help the poor—I wish he now were here.
Father and mother had been dead a week,
And then I got these shot-holes in my cheek.
'Twas lucky, warn't it, they just miss'd my eye ?
I little thought an enemy so nigh.
Just by the bounds of Squire Grubb's estate
Jem Grimes got cotech'd—unlucky chap, my mate—
But I cut clear away, and on my back
A zight of sport ; believe me, filled a zack."
"But, what about some missing sheep ?" I said,
Stephen look'd grave and shook his aged head.
"Aye," he replied, "an awkward job that 'ere,
Yet folks made far too much of the affair ;
Besides, 'twas years before the poaching night,
And I paid dearly for it—zarv'd me right.
I know, good zir, you would not me offend,
But don't you think 'tis time that tale should end ?

Still, ever since there's none have giv'n to me
E'en broken wittles, or an ounce of tea ;
And as for coals, or blankets, Christmas box,
I might as well have ax'd a hass or hox.
A loaf and half-a-crown a week, you zee,
Has not been much for my old gal and me,
Besides a grandson with us, making three,
As stout a lad as one would chance to find,
And he would have his inside jolly lin'd.
Some cadging then we 've done at times, of course,
But this has only made our case the worse.
Oft hath it struck me, zir, in thinking mood,
My betters *zure* are not at all times good !
I ax your pardon ? Still have they kept on
'Bout some dark deed of mine done years ago.
And so some will, no doubt, for ever do,
To keep me down life's dwindling journey through.
'Tis hard when most were then unborn, I know.
Why won't they let a fellow-sinner go
In peace ? If none will others here forgive,
How can they, zir, in heav'n expect to live ? "
I star'd as Stephen animated grew,
His wild eye fir'd as if to pierce me through.
A tear then struggled o'er his furrow'd cheek,
And for awhile I felt I dare not speak.
At last, " regretting I could not restore
Peace to his heart, I bade him brood no more
O'er wrongs he'd suffer'd, and while spar'd to live
Strive to forget, and from his heart forgive."
" True," Stephen said, " and I will freely own
The course you mark out is the only one,
Still I must feel until my dying day,
I've been neglected upon life's rough way."
Then " warming up " as he before had done,
With energetic action all his own,
He bade me listen, for he thought me kind,

And not to proud too hear a poor man's mind,
To few plain words which he desir'd to zay
With all respect, and in his simple way.
"Has not the meanest flow'r of field a share
Of nature's gifts by God's Almighty care?
Then should His ministers for e'er pass by
A poor and wretched zinner, such as I?
The parson thinks I am a grumbling cove,
But, as his footsteps hither never move,
How can he know? He lists to all that's zaid
By favourites, and from Stephen turns his head.
I ne'er had means to gratify my wishes,
While preachers of the Word get loaves and fishes,
So most do zay, and nobody denies!
They cannot all, I think, be telling lies.
And well I know, when I a parson meet,
He looks as if he'd lots of grub to eat;
And far too jolly, by a precious sight,
For one who cannot please his appetite!"
Thus overrul'd, by feeling on his mind
Against his neighbours, who he thought unkind
For shunning him, because some years foregone
The laws he'd broken, and a crime had done,
Would Stephen rave; "for punishment severe
He'd had enough, yet it from year to year
Was spread by gossip—ever known to thrive—
Which kept the cause of all his woe alive."
At last he cried, "My life is near its close;
To Heav'n alone I'll look for real repose.
My sins make up a heavy load to bear,
But not too much for all the mercy there."
"Farewell," I said, "old man; be so resign'd,
And think no more of earth to thee unkind.
In heav'n the humble will be quite as great
As those who here have held a grand estate."
He bow'd assent, but would with last words say,

“I’ve had my feelings, zir, as well as they ;
Though hard my lot, I ne’er have been a grunter ;”
And then I took my leave of Stephen Hunter.
Alas ! alas ! I could not but repeat,
As from the old man’s cot I turn’d my feet,
“Had’st thou but had in early days a guide,
Thou wouldest not have wandered far and wide
From life’s broad road beyond a sheltering fold,
Nor been neglected when infirm and old.

THE PURRIERS.

Lo ! where the poplar bends its stately plume,
As if it would authority assume,
Hard by a lane that leads to park-like lands
From highway side, John Purrier’s cottage stands ;
His only dwelling since a start in life
He made with Mary, long his faithful wife—
For sixty years ! an age if we look on,
But nothing to survey when pass’d and gone.
Cob-wall’d and thatched, it was a plain abode,
While its interior little comfort show’d.
Their ancient furniture was all unsound,
A few old Windsor chairs, a table round,
Some hanging shelves, which well expos’d to view
A willow pattern dish, and plate or two ;
An old brown jug, and damag’d teapot rare,
The small remains of family crock’ry-ware.
By chimney-side hung toasting-fork and sieve,
And pictures fram’d of Adam and of Eve,
With others similar, from eight to ten,
Including Daniel in the lion’s den !
There, on a shelf, stood yellow-colour’d bowl,
An antique relic of some jovial soul ;

And near it time-worn clock and warming-pan,
The work of "Tubal Cain," or other man !
But above all old Purrier had to grace
His dingy walls and decorate the place,
Was life-like picture of (in maple frame)
Lord of the manor—nobleman of fame !
Gift to electors of whate'er degree,
Who voted for his lordship's nominee !
John, as a freeholder, possess'd a vote,
And so it happen'd that a man of note,
Before the last election, came to see
The humbler folk with rights of property.
The Peer a *Liberal* was, to bribe too pure,
But he knew how some voters to secure !
And John, though called an old Conservative,
To any candidate support would give,
And go on polling day beneath the banner
Of his "kind friend" the lord of *all* the manor.
Specially, too, if he that way could gain
A little help by "golden sovereign !"
It came before his lordship left the door.
" 'Twas only *charity* to one so poor."
To do him justice, John thereafter view'd
His lordship's gift with humble gratitude ;
He said "he lik'd the nobles" certain sure,
For seldom they forgot the labouring poor ;
And on one visit, in confiding tone,
Told me how much the Peer for him had done.
"How, when election over, kind and free,
His lordship call'd again, in company
With his land steward, both with feelings hearty,
To thank him much for holding with their party,
And how his vote did help to win the day.
And all the compliments the Peer would pay
To his old gal ; and didn't she feel proud !
She laughed '*istorical*' and sobb'd aloud ;"

And then he asked me, in a whisper clear,
"If I did think another 'lection near."
He toiled through life till he was seventy-four,
When loss of sight compell'd him to give o'er ;
And with a little aid from parish rate
He liv'd contented in his darken'd state.
By nature free, and yet with feelings kind,
He'd plainly speak to every one his mind,
In his own way ; and oft it made one stare
To see the pow'r he had by nature there.
In fact, most thought him, whether great or small,
A rare old bird, and quite original !
He ne'er had learnt to read or write, yet he
Could buy and sell with much dexterity,
Whene'er to market by his master sent,
Who with John's rough accounts was quite content.
With manners quiet, some good taste he had,
Which he had nurtur'd ever since a lad.
A love for music, one which cheer'd his life,
And he could turn a tune on reed or fife
With perfect ease, if not with artist's skill,
"Robin Adair" or "Lass of Richmond Hill."
And what he much enjoy'd, whene'er he'd time,
Was to attend to stories told in rhyme.
But most of all it pleased him to rehearse
Lines which, he said, "a friend had put in verse,"
And, if requested with a gracious voice,
That he would do, "he thought they were so choice."

" TO THE ROBIN.

" As Christmas approaches,
The robin encroaches,
And lifts his inquisitive head,
As much as to say,
Don't send me away,
But throw me a crumb of your bread.

“ He bids me rejoice,
With sweet friendly voice,
From mistletoe bough and from holly.
He chirps, as he nods,
‘ Oh, what are the odds,
As long as you’re happy and jolly ? ’

“ Chirp on, little man,
As bravely you can ;
Meet winter, though tender your wing.
Approach without fear,
Your crumb shall be here
Till plenty returns with the spring.”

This ended, John would say with warm delight,
“ Aye, it *did* please me, ere I lost my sight,
To see the pert and merry little chap
Prance to my door to give his friendly tap.
So bold ! yet often with a look as shy
As maidens put on when a sweetheart’s nigh ;
And now, by Heaven’s great mercy, I retain
My old friend’s image on my time-worn brain.”
Lines to the “ woodlark ” then would he repeat,
“ He liked the bird and thought its notes so sweet.”

“ TO THE WOODLARK.

“ Amid the little feather’d throng
That sports o’er Nature’s face,
The woodlark with its cheerful song
Must have a foremost place.
The robin bids us all “ rejoice,”
With ecstasy replete !
But then he cannot boast of voice
More tender and more sweet—

“Nor yet more constant—as in spring
Alike in autumn day,
And when old Time’s unerring wing
Brings on the year’s decay;
On ruined branches, ice-clad ground,
And sods that late were green,
The merry little minstrel’s found
Enlivening the scene.

“Thus faithful, as the rolling year
Is waning, bleak and chill,
When in December, dark and drear,
The skylark’s song is still,
The woodlark’s gentle cadences
Will warning give to some,
‘Their summer gone, as hours grow less,
Life’s winter soon will come.’

“He leaves us not for warmer land,
But shares the nipping blast.
He goes not with a fickle band
When sunny days are past.
Then may his voice in Flirton Croft
Be heard from wood or grove,
For many a day ; so sweet, so soft,
So full of peace and love.”

John and his Mary early lov’d and well,
And most allow’d she’d been the village belle
In her May-day ; and he would boast with glee,
“How, when his wife was young, he car’d for *she*,
Protecting her when she a-washing went
To Vicarage House, or that of Squire Dent—
Who liv’d at least two miles from his old cot,
Along a dreary road, a lonely spot!

How he'd not let her, when her work was done,
At night or early dawn, wag home alone:
For in those days they work'd a 'precious sight'
More hard than they do now; oft through the night."
Some ways she had undoubtedly her own,
And cider-making might be counted one.
Mary the apples in her palms would take,
And squeeze them till her wrinkled arms would ache:
Hands which might once have cleanly been and spruce,
But long since alter'd: then convey'd the juice
To earthen pot, or rather washing pan,
When fermentation very soon began.
Should fingers fail, in skill she beat her fellows,
Seeking assistance from an aged bellows!
Fill'd it with apples—then she jump'd and sat
With might and main upon the homely vat!
And juice ooz'd thickly, though in plenty, out
Of pointed end of her old bellows' spout.
Mary, then pleas'd, would her old fingers dip in
The well-fill'd pan, and cry, "You're done, my pippin!"
Sometimes, when I had call'd to see the pair,
I found them seated at their evening fare
Of tea and toast, when they express'd the wish
"I did not feel too proud to take a dish."
I made excuses, till one afternoon
I felt compell'd to promise them, that soon
"I'd take a cup," lest they might think me much
Too grand to share a little meal with such
Poor humble folk. But hardly had consent
Been giv'n when I, to my astonishment,
Found that they drank from out the teapot's spout!
No cups requiring—turn and turn about.
No wonder they no crockery had on shelf!
What need had they for any stock of delft?
Both were well car'd for, yet *they* often had
A "poor mouth" open, with a grievance sad—

Practice too common with the aged poor
When friends salute them as they pass their door.
Mary in youth had learnt to read and write,
And in her class was thought a "scholard" bright;
So now, though voice was weak and eyes were dim,
She could, through ancient glasses, read to him.
Methinks I hear her now her cot within,
Her morning reading in clear tone begin;
The Psalms of David she preferr'd by choice,
And Tate and Brady's version pleas'd her voice.
"How bless'd is he who ne'er consents by ill
Advice to walk," pronounc'd by her would thrill
The dullest ear and most unheeding mind—
Her pow'r of speech was of no common kind.
The brave old pair had weather'd many a storm,
And long at double wicket held good form—
John had been faithful in a shepherd's place,
The same, through life incurring no disgrace;
So when old age depriv'd him of all pow'r,
He'd gifts of wood and coal for wintry hour.
Of landlords he had ne'er through life a dread,
For Mary had their cot inherited
Before she enter'd on the marriage state;
Still both were burthens on the parish rate!
For walls of stone would not pay baker's bill,
Though garden ground might help the purse to fill.
Too old to work, they could not now supply
Their daily food; but, as no family
They'd had to rear, some knowing folks would say,
"They should have sav'd some pence for adverse day."
With half-a-crown and two good loaves the pair
Had from the parish stock, their weekly share—
Oft, too, a slice from friend or neighbour's fare,
With gifts in coin from some kind visitor—
They never wanted food though they were poor.
At last arriv'd th' inevitable day,

When poor and rich alike are bound to pay
The debt of Nature—and they pass'd away.
Soon 'twas discover'd he had little store
Of hoarded money—some ten pounds or more—
In worsted stocking, kept where none could go,
Or in sly corner of an old bureau !
Whether he had at Savings Bank beside
An “extra crop,” none could the fact decide ;
For 'mong the poor 'twas no uncommon game
To place cash there in other parties' name.
A decent couple ! kept in age from grief !
But were they well entitled to relief
From parish fund ? Too frequently a case
Like theirs occurs (which finds a tender place
In overseers' hearts), and they derive
Full gain ; while one who hath to daily strive
And slave for many helpless ones, can't get
A “loaf or fish ” from out the union net !
Some broken-back'd, hard-working mother kind,
Who, living “out of sight,” is “out of mind.”

WIDOW SLY.

'Twas in an aged vicar's happy reign
At Flirton Croft—his like will ne'er again
Thither be seen—when little work of art
Was so well play'd on the inventor's part,
It chill'd for some short time the good man's heart.
For fifty years and more he'd held the cure—
Time long enough to know the neighbouring poor,
The greater part of whom from childhood there
Had liv'd beneath his kind and pastoral care ;
And he *believ'd* he knew their habits well,

As not a day would pass but some would tell
A tale heart-rending with a tearful eye,
By "sickness" caus'd, or "pinching poverty."
And they knew, too, his heart would ne'er say "nay"
To all who press'd it in a telling way.
So most succeeded, worthy poor or not,
And many Dodgers oft a shilling got!
The vicar had some feelings to admire,
But was more suited for a country squire
Than parson, with grave duties to fulfil
With care and prudence, yet with gen'rous will.
The good old vicar, liberal to a fault,
Could never make his tender feelings halt,
Kind-hearted soul! As age came on, whene'er
He took his daily drive in pony chair,
Lin'd his free purse with silver to the brim,
And never brought a sixpence home with him!
One day he met upon the plain, hard by
Her cottage garden bound'ry, Widow Sly!
Sly, too, by nature—all appropriate name!
With Vicar "Heartwell" she'd a winning game.
And e'er to him could show her art and wit,
So at this time she fell into a fit!
Shook were his nerves. "Afflicted soul," he cried,
"Oh, bear her quickly to her cot inside."
Sharp on the word two stout attendants bore
The helpless sufferer to her humble door.
He shook her hand, and in it plac'd a crown,
Exclaiming, "Soon I'll send the doctor down."
The heavy coin within her clenching hand,
Seem'd to induce her senses to expand.
Then half a one to *bearers* each he gave,
Who curt'sied low and solemn as the grave.
He left the cot—while Widow Sly within,
Distorted, groan'd, and with repulsive grin.
Shock'd by the scene, to home his course he turn'd,

The pace increasing as his feelings burn'd ;
Then sent a message with his man and gig,
To bring with expedition Dr. Twigg.
Soon he arriv'd, and soon the piteous case
Was told by quiv'ring lips ; while pallid face
And trembling hand show'd how the good man had
Been mov'd at witnessing a sight so sad !
Twigg heard in silence all the vicar said,
Doubted the facts, and shook his knowing head ;
Then tried, but fail'd, to make the vicar see
That Sly had work'd on his credulity.
The old man held his view, and bade Twigg go
And all attention to the suff'rer show,
If spring of life had not then ceas'd to flow.
At once he started, though 'twas getting late,
And found his patient at her garden gate,
Looking as if she'd drop of comfort had.
"How feel you now ?" quoth Twigg; "you look full sad,"
"Good sir," said she, "I've been uncommon bad."
He from the vicar's man had learnt the case,
So went prepar'd with pills a pow'rful brace,
For constitution strongest quite enough,
And well he knew that Widow Sly was tough !
"I've heard," he said, "how ill you've been to-day,
So you must have this dose without delay.
Attack so dreadful, sudden, and severe
Demands the promptest treatment—that is clear."
"I'll take it, sir," said she, "this very night."
"Now," he rejoin'd, "and while within my sight.
No nonsense, Sly, but swallow them like liquor,
Or I will send this instant for the vicar."
The threat sufficient prov'd, and quickly down
Each bolus went, beneath a maniac's frown.
"I'll call," said Twigg, "within a day or two,
And see th' effect my dose has had on you.
Another fit like this *you* cannot bear,

And I, you know, can very soon be here,
 Bringing the potent medicine 'as before.'
 But sure I am that I shall hear no more,
 For many a day at least, of falling fits;
 You must in other ways employ your wits.
 Since the good vicar's plainly seen you through,
 You'd better find some honest work to do,
 Or soon to Union house you'll have to go,
 Or, what's more likely, to the county gaol;
 To do you good the 'treadmill' would not fail."
 He left, his visit o'er, she *pip'd her eye*.
 He smiling said, "Good evening, Mrs. Sly."
 Thus in remote and thinly peopl'd parts,
 Dodgers exist of high *Degree in Arts*;
 Not so refin'd, perhaps, but quite as witty,
 As others bred in crowded town or city.
 So moral teachers when they walk abroad,
 Can find enough to do on every road!

MARY MAPLE.

NEAR the old church, with firm but gentle rule,
 Poor Mary Maple kept the village school,
 Where the good seed, well sown in new-made soil,
 Gave the best promise to the child of toil.
 Although convenient to the great high road,
 In spot secluded was her quaint abode;
 One which an architect would style, no doubt,
 As Early English, common thereabout.
 Its walls of cob, and ivy-mantl'd roof,
 Made it look warm, but hardly weather-proof.
 Descending gently from the village green;
 The calm retreat was very quickly seen;

Its garden bounded by luxuriant fields,
Where Nature yearly her abundance yields.
In such a spot would snowdrops show their pride,
And pallid primrose deck the bank's greenside ;
Small birds would warble 'mid the charms of spring,
Young lambs would play, and nightingales would sing.
At such a spot a scene would meet the eye
Which e'en Old England could not oft supply.
There had she liv'd for fifty years and more,
And kept her footsteps from the workhouse door,
A lonely widow on the world's rough way,
Earning a scanty pittance day by day.
Yet sweet contentment smil'd on wrinkl'd face,
Which hard and toiling hours could not displace ;
Mary would not be thought a teacher now
Fitted for urchins destin'd for the plough,
Nor yet for little maidens form'd to grace
In early life domestic servants' place.
She only gave a simple education,
Suited to children of a humble station ;
Her brains were not with richest knowledge stor'd
Like those of members of a grand School Board.
She taught them how to read, and write, and spell
With ease, and some arithmetic as well ;
And above all she stamp'd the mind of youth
With blessèd lessons from the Word of Truth.
On schoolroom wall, time-stain'd, were primly hung
Bright-colour'd pictures—gifts to her when young—
Chiefly of subjects of a sacred kind,
To make impression on the infant mind ;
Samplers as well of ancient date were there,
All neatly fram'd and kept with miser care.
Some work'd by her great grandmother's own hand,
When George the First was monarch of the land.
Some by her mother and herself in turn,
Accomplishment enabling them to earn

Their daily bread in scientific way,
And mark as well as make the garment gay.
A map or two were there to please the eye,
And aid instruction in geography;
And few strong forms, a reading desk, and stool
Made up the needed furniture of school :
Whilst o'er her seat, to help correction's nod,
Was well display'd the ever-threatening rod.
'Twas seldom used ; but Mary was not one
To disregard the words of Solomon.
Thus did she live, and held her useful course,
Till one rough day, Reform, with sweeping force,
Proclaim'd the hard-and-fast establish'd rule,
That every child should go to parish school ;
And every parent who would not consent
To have it taught by Act of Parliament,
Should be committed, should his reasons fail,
To pass a month or so in county gaol !
Say, gentle reader, what could Mary do
To gain a livelihood at seventy-two ?
She could not, e'en with spectacles on nose,
Handle her needle, making shirt or hose.
And as for dresses, she'd not even try
To please young maidens with their finery.
She could not take the rake or fork in hand,
And help to make the hay on nearest land ;
Nor could she hope a little sum to gain
At harvest, helping to secure the grain.
What could she do ? her occupation gone,
She felt for ever lost and woe-begone :
Old age at hand, where could the poor thing turn
In search of work, her daily bread to earn ?
And the few friends who could have giv'n her aid
Had one by one the debt of nature paid.
With mind depress'd and in continual fear
Of being forc'd from her old home so dear,

To close her days within the Union gates,
A useless burden to the parish rates—
Increasing sorrow hasten'd life's decay,
And Mary Maple quickly pass'd away.

CHARLES LARDNER.

CHARLES LARDNER drove a steady thriving trade
As baker, for the bread was good he made ;
While his " two-thirds " would with the grocery line
The business of a storekeeper combine,
And deal in endless goods from tea to twine ;
From milk and butter, bacon, cheese, and eggs,
Soda and starch to clothes lines, props and pegs,
From crock'ry ware to brushes, brooms, and pails,
Baskets and pans to lucifers and nails—
In short, 'twas plain, e'en at a glance, to see
Their shop contain'd a rare variety
Of " odds and ends " to bring in £ s. d.
And well they knew how ready cash to make
By turn of scale—they both were wide awake !
Charles, a Dissenter, was of virtue full,
And vow'd " he acted " e'er on "*principull*."
" The sole foundation, he saw well enough,
For sure success since he had dealt in snuff,
Short pipes and long—Havana's best cigar,
Fit for a ' tip-top ' club or public ' bar ' !
Pale ales in bottle, stout from Guinness' store,
And purest wine," the mixture as before !
The milk and butter, too, he sold was fair,
And this is saying much for both, so rare
In this our day, when, throughout all the nation,
All food is subject to adulteration.
These articles came under his own eye,

And none his zeal about them could deny.
Oft would he state, "He led a wildish life
Before he was *converted*—took a wife."
With pretty little fortune too, good luck !
Among the Nonconformists quite a duck !
At meeting-house he once essay'd to preach,
But that accomplishment he fail'd to reach ;
While *she* succeeded—won the praise of all,
And preach'd away, regardless of St. Paul.
One day, when walking with important stir
On narrow pathway with a "traveller,"
Plain Mrs. Downright following close behind,
Heard him declaring what he call'd "his mind."
Whilst his companion look'd in pious mood,
As if Charles were for this world far too good !
And with expression gentle, bland, and meek,
Smil'd in his face as he began to speak ;
Which Charles perceiving with intense delight,
Commenc'd as follows with schismatic might :
"Believe me, neighbour Chaplow, since I took
The blessed pledge, and evil ways forsook,
Gave up intoxicating drink and swipes ;
Renounc'd tobacco, in cigars or pipes
(Such things but help to make, and please the sot),
Upon the road to fortune I have got."
"Of course," roar'd Downright, close behind his back,
"For you have sold them freely by the sack,
And at a price I've heard too many say,
Exceeding treble what they ought to pay ;
So while such pleasure you for heav'n forego,
You'd send all others to eternal woe.
Humbug and cant ! how oft you fill the till—
Quicker than fair and open dealing will."
And some, 'twould seem, do like to be well gull'd,
As much as others like their liquor mull'd,
And swallow all they hear from smooth-mouth'd chap

As infants do their mother's milk or pap.
This silenc'd Charles : as if an awful warning,
He left his friend, and never said " Good-morning."

LUKE SHEPHERD.

LUKE SHEPHERD had a harness-maker been,
And better, fairer tradesman ne'er was seen ;
An active man, he'd done his share of work,
And now could hardly handle knife and fork.
Old age advancing, with rheumatic gout,
Had floor'd his stumps and nearly bowl'd him out ;
Besides, on one weak leg a constant sore
Kept him a captive to his bedroom floor.
Still he with cheerful spirit met the foe,
Remarking, " Time had taken him in *toe*."
Luke had a sportsman been in earlier day,
And oft in hunting-field had led the way ;
Well mounted, he would ever prove to all
A bold example. At a fence or wall,
O'er rapid brook, or ditch by double row
Of blackthorn hedge, he would not flinch to go ;
For well he knew his steed was game and clever,
And felt alike with him, "'Tis now or never."
So round his little room would hang in state
Portraits of famous hunters, all first-rate,
In frames of maple or in rosewood set ;
Of jockeys, too, upon a Derby pet.
Two worthy sons had he, and matchless wife,
The joy and comfort of his closing life.
Though she had been but step-mother to Joe
And Jack for five-and-twenty years or so,
They liv'd so well together. All could see
Theirs was a home of peace and harmony.

Luke acted wisely. Ere his children grew
To years discreet, he married number two.
Had he delayed till they were "Hobbledehoy's"
He never could have known his many joys.
Friends would have kindly "urged them not to care
For step-mother, and her position rare.
It was not she who brought you into life,
So pay her no respect as 'father's wife.'"
Such counsel these devoted sons escap'd
By the wise course which Luke himself had shap'd.
Of all the varied, arduous duties giv'n
To gentle woman here by troubles driv'n,
None can surpass, however long they live,
Those which the post of step-mother doth give;
When selfish man, "for better and for worse,"
Swears to protect his wife through life's rough course;
And with a solemn (oft forgotten) vow
On her "his worldly goods to well endow"
Then proves the means with which her way he'd bless
Consist of several small incumbrances!
While earth's good things and gifts she chiefly brings,
As he with satisfaction claps his wings.
What wonder she has such a load to bear?
What wonder she must disappointment share?
Fair Flirton Croft, how much you plainly show
Of good and evil in this world of woe;
Of vice, too widely known in every stage,
And virtue, scarce as seen by youth, old age;
Supporting with unusual filial care
A failing father in his time-worn chair;
Cheering away each weary, painful hour
With all the love and zeal within its power.
For such a sight, so beautiful and rare,
Go thither quickly; and if Luke be there,
He will receive each kind inquiring guest
With grateful hospitality the best.

JIM WEATHERALL.

OLD Weatherall more than fourteen years had been
At Flirton Croft, and near the village green
His pretty dwelling stood, well suited for
A staid domestic pair, or bachelor.
Long had it been a simple cottage, till
He purchas'd it, and with judicious skill
Improv'd its features, added to its size,
And made its fashion blend and harmonize
With fair surroundings rich with Nature's art,
And seem as if of her it form'd a part.
With look of health, of quietude, and love,
It well deserv'd the title of "Spring Grove."
Well, it adorn'd a generous plot of ground
Of some two acres, clad and shelter'd round
With well-grown trees to check the sharpest air,
And fan the heat of summer sunshine there.
Whilst open space remain'd to make it light,
And look, though snug, as healthy as 'twas bright.
It e'er would strike a stranger passing by,
And oft attract and please the tourist's eye,
With wide bay windows either side the door,
And entrance porch, in season cover'd o'er
With clust'ring rose and honeysuckle sweet,
While trellis, neatly trimm'd and kept replete
With twining creepers by each basement room,
Look'd ever green and spread their rich perfume.
Add to all this a very liberal space
Of pleasure ground, which varied flowers would grace,
Extending yards some fifty from the road,
And you can picture Weatherall's abode.
Pleas'd with his garden and its ample lawn,
Dotted around with many a shrub and thorn,

He lov'd to see young hearts together meet
There, prim'd with fun and harmony replete,
For summer games ; whilst he, in arbour nigh,
Smil'd at their sport, and thought of days gone by.
Social he was, though quiet in his way,
Friendly, but ne'er misled by gossip's sway ;
Ready to visit, unobserv'd, the poor,
And carry comfort to the cottage door.
Hence the old man, 'mong neighbours great and small,
Gain'd a good name and due respect from all.
For some few years he puzzl'd sharpest brains ;
None could find out, in spite of all their pains,
What he had been—if merchant all his days,
Or if he'd walk'd in far more learn'd ways
Of science, or of some profession wise,
In this our land, or in her colonies.
And most were curious to know, for he
Had often said in conversation free,
“ How he for years had suffered from distress,
And how a fluke had brought him great success.”
At last, one eve, when sitting by his fire,
Between the vicar and the parish squire,
Enjoying each their grog and friendly “ smoke,”
He gave to them with either thumb a poke !
And as they started suddenly to see
So rare a burst of sociability,
He told them, “ If they'd listen for a while,
He'd state his hist'ry in the simplest style.”
They bow'd assent, fill'd glass and pipe again,
And thus spake Weatherall in accents plain :
“ Born in the West—a gentleman—and bred
With generous care, well nourish'd and well fed,
I pass'd the happiest childhood through, and then
Was sent to public school—my age but ten.
Some years I ran, in an Etonian race,
And held a fair, though not distinguish'd place.

Losing my father when I'd reach'd my 'teens'—
The best and kindest guide through life's rough scenes—
I soon left Eton, lawyer's craft to learn,
Before an age when I could well discern
The calling or profession best to suit
My turn of mind, and yield abundant fruit.
At last, my term of clerkship running out,
And I deem'd qualified to 'go about
My business,' took, in earnest to begin,
Convenient offices in Staples Inn.
There, day by day, I sat from ten to four,
Perusing precedents and reading law,
And hop'd that clients might approach my door.
By Nature never sanguine, yet a share
Of work I looked for; promises so fair
From many years before I made my start,
Having been made; could not but cheer the heart.
But, ah! how quickly these, like 'crust of pie,'
Were broken, proving business 'all my eye.'
So, after years of hope deferr'd quite sick,
I felt dispos'd for e'er to 'cut my stick'
From Staples Inn, and try some other way
Of earning pence, as each succeeding day
Made private means grow 'beautifully less,'
And brought on ugly symptoms of distress.
I never lik'd to hear, much less to aid,
Another's quarrels, oft 'bout trifles made;
Nor was I one for getting up a suit
In hopes of settling soon some old dispute
Between two neighbours fierce, who both their way
Would strive to get, and freely money pay;
Resolv'd on legal fight, in temper cross,
In spite of warning of a certain loss.
Hence I could never make an onward move,
Nor find on road of life the easy groove
That leads to competence, if not to wealth,

And deep anxiety brought on ill-health.
Trouble on trouble came on magic wing,
And I soon found I was a lonely thing.
Some friends soon vanish'd as my means grew less,
And some relations felt my great distress
Was well deserv'd; 'for sure they ought to find me
A man with lots of gold to leave behind me.'
Still I could not to new employment turn,
Too late in life the rudiments to learn
Of merchandise or engineering skill,
However great the taste or strong the will;
Or how to keep some wholesale shop or store;
Or well prepare the 'mixture as before.'
This being so, I felt securely bound
In Law's embrace, till opening could be found
In some vocation suited to my view,
Which I could fill, and with success pursue.
Lost in a fog, adversity had spread
Above my way, while doubt perplex'd my head;
A happy thought came o'er my aching brain,
Which gave me hope a great success to gain.
A lucky dream! which, as at morn it came,
Turn'd out quite true and lifted me to fame.
'Done,' I exclaimed! 'I've little in my fob,
But one advertisement will do the job;
A few smart lines shall be my last endeavour;
'Give me a pen,' I cried; 'tis now or never!'
A striking notice then I shortly penn'd
In offhand style, without delay to send
To daily papers, feeling sure that most
Would such insert as I would pay the cost.
It could not give offence to mortal man,
It libell'd none, and thus it simply ran:
'We think we can with confidence now state
That Mr. Weatherall, Solicitor, late
Of Staples Inn, but now of Chancery Lane,

Doth, in the Austrian Lottery, obtain
A prize of twenty thousand pounds in money !
May he have bed of down, grub sweet as honey !
And as he's much respected in his station,
We tender him our best congratulation.'
Soon turn'd the tide, and with increasing flow
Brought Fortune's gifts. My tradesmen bended low
Respectful heads, and whensoever we pass'd,
A look of confidence upon me cast.
While many sought my orders, day by day,
And would not press their 'little bill' to pay.
Clients advanc'd in dozens to my door,
With safe securities, and something more,
My day-book soon was fill'd with business good,
And office, where a half-starv'd clerk had stood
With hands before him gloomy as a mute,
In solemn pomp and shabby funeral suit ;
Some half a dozen more in spirit gay,
Copied with speed, and quickly earn'd their pay.
No more some friends my whereabouts forgot,
But 'look'd me up' ; whilst relatives, a lot
I hardly knew, call'd on me day and night—
'My cheerful company gave such delight.'
With fortune following at a bounteous rate,
I quickly reach'd an independent state ;
Age, too, advancing, with declining health,
Told me 'twas vain to labour on for wealth.
And as I'd earn'd enough to guard my door
From dun or bailiff, I threw business o'er,
To seek a quiet, comfortable cot,
Wherein to dwell contented with my lot.
The scene soon chang'd. I sold for what 'twas worth
My practice, and to this fair spot of earth,
Retir'd to live on what a fluke had won,
And strife and tumult of the world to shun.
Thus you will see, my friends, with glance of eye,

That life to all is but a 'lottery.'"
Old Weatherall, having ended his narration,
Which caus'd in squire and vicar some sensation;
Each other's hands with heartiness they shook,
And then a pledg'd and parting bumper took.
Although for years small practice he had seen,
An idle, useless man he ne'er had been.
He wrote and publish'd in another name,
But, lacking patrons' help, he won no fame.
A turn for music often sooth'd his mind;
A love of poetry and song would find
Diversion for him in a prospect bare,
And bade him often sing "Begone, dull care."
His ready humour, and delight in fun,
Made some conclude, perhaps, that he was one
Devoid of serious thought; but all who long
Had known old Jim could prove their judgment wrong.
But, whether form'd by Nature kind to be,
The most inclin'd to fun or gravity,
The following lines 'mong many from his brain,
The fact may make to ev'ry reader plain.

CHRISTMAS CAROL, BY AN OLD BOY.

ALL hail, old friend, with berries spread,
And mistletoe around your head—
White for age, and red for bloom
Of youth and health! Old Christmas, come,
As erst in hours of infancy,
So full of hope and merry glee—
Welcome, and while with wreath of bay
You deck the closing year's decay
With memories of a bygone day.

Welcome ! yet while you're repeating
Former pleasures, happy meeting,

Is not mine

One by one,

Old friends have gone,

And o'er their shrine,

As you fill the vacant places,

Other forms my mind's eye traces,

Other smiles and long-lov'd faces.

Come, old boy ; and though not met

By me the same, sure no regret

Shall 'scape from one who ever should

Be grateful for a world of good.

Juice of vine

And generous store

Is not mine,

As once of yore,

When round the kindred-circled hearth

A holiday young crew their mirth

Exulting threw !

When "snap-dragon" in social night

Made droll old faces with its light

Of varied hue,

As if no reason there,

For childhood's joy—

In days when dawn'd no thought of care,

Old Christmas ! when a boy.

Yet come, for thou art welcome here,

Cheering on another year,

O'er my time-worn wrinkl'd brow.

The race is no more kept up now

With lightsome youth

Of "slipper hunt," or "Blind man's buff ;"

The world's rebuffs have me enough

Blinded, in truth !

And now I'm but a joyless thing,

Hope with my footsteps lessening.
Still, I'll greet thee as of yore,
Christmas, and of thee implore
Pardon for long years ill spent!
Time neglected! blessings lent—
Thus I hail thee. Quickly come,
Chasing sorrow, brightening gloom!
And with cheering advent near
Heralding another year.
Grant that with its healing wing
Peace may shine and plenty bring—
Peace, the greatest blessing sent
To man by the Omnipotent;
Peace that all may learn to live
Worthy of all a pitying God can give.

FROM MY COUCH.

COULD I but stroll, as once I could,
Along the meadows gay,
Attracted there in lithesome mood
By philomel's sweet lay;
Or by the cuckoo's welcome call
Proclaim'd on friendly wing,
To join the yearly festival
And holiday of spring.

Might not this feeble frame once more
Some little strength regain?
And might not balmy air restore
Repose to aching brain?
But sigh not, sinking heart, nor yield
To musings sad; but know
That He who clothes the grass of field
His care for thee will show.

TO THE NIGHTINGALE.

SING, sweet bird, whose tiny throat
Fillest with unrivall'd note
 The boundless air ;
Thou whose small yet gen'rous wing
Beareth the memories of spring
 To mind of care.

Sing thine own inspiring lay,
As if all powerful to stay
 The fleeting hour.
Weary wanderers to thy voice
Listen, as it trills "rejoice"—
 'Mid bud and flow'r.

All the sounds of joyous youth,
All the words of love and truth
 Ear ever heard,
Treasur'd seem to be by thee,
King of song and minstrelsy.
 Sing on, sweet bird !

'TIS DARKEST WHEN DAYBREAK IS NEAR.

THAT this pretty world is a highway of trouble,
None bravely pursuing its course can deny,
That life is at best but a vapour, or bubble
 Which swells for a moment and vanishes by.

Yet cheer up, all ye who are bound to keep toiling—
 'Neath gloom it may be—there is nothing to fear.

From duty dismiss ev'ry thought of recoiling,
For oftentimes 'tis darkest when daybreak is near.

Of purpose keep firm, although heart-sick and weary
Of hope long deferr'd; it will one day appear !
E'en summer hath clouds that are heavy and dreary,
And oftentimes 'tis darkest when daybreak is near.

Care not because "one in his mouth had a ladle
Of gold at his birth"—money won't always cheer !
And poorest will very soon find from their cradle
That oftentimes 'tis darkest when daybreak is near.

Fret not, if the state of your prospects and rental
Your nuptials delay, and your darling looks queer !
Remember in moments the most sentimental,
That oftentimes 'tis darkest when daybreak is near.

And blame not the world with its troublesome highway,
Nor ever say "die;" but in accents sincere,
"It would not go better could I have it my way,"
For oftentimes 'tis darkest when daybreak is near.

ÉCARTÉ.

Oh ! don't forbid it, dearest ma !
I like Écarté so !
Besides, the captain is by far
The nicest player I know.
I like his style so much, and then
What "ivories" he shows !
And what expressive lips, too, when
He's going to "propose !"

His words flow out like butter-milk,
Not difficult to catch ;
His moustache is like silkworm silk,
“ Imperial ” to match.
His clear blue eye like planet bright
A winking twinkling throws,
His little hands are lily white
When going, ma, to “ propose.”

You'll own you had flirtations, ma,
At cribbage or piquet,
Before you fairly hook'd papa !
Then why should you not let
Me play my cards with all the skill
Inherited from those
I love so much ; and then he will,
I'm sure he must, “ propose.”

You wish me off (you can't deny)
And settled in my teens !
You court the aid of some, but I
Distrust all go-betweens !
Give *me* the chance, and when I see
The turn-up card disclose
That *hearts* are trumps ; the captain, ma,
Must surely then “ propose.”

Oh, I *do* love Écarté, dear !
Oppose it not, I pray !
And see, the captain's coming near,
He loves with me to play !
Upon his breast he wears his star ;
'Tis killing !—goodness knows !
I'll take him at his word, mamma,
When next he does “ propose.”

JOHN BULL TO HIS BOYS DURING THE LATE AMERICAN WAR.

Look out, my brave lads, a squall's on our bow !
 Our cousin's for picking a quarrel ;
 He wants the old wreath o'er Britannia's brow
 Of bay never-fading, and laurel.
 Your rifles stand by,
 Your powder keep dry,
 All volunteers now, and no press'd men !
 True Britons must show
 That in giving a foe
 A polishing off, they're the best men.

Three cheers then outpour, tho' throats it makes sore,
 John Bull would as soon stand a-picking
 By a cannibal crew, at a delicate stew,
 As take from a Yankee a licking !
 We've " Shaws " nowadays
 In Life Guards and Greys,
 The same as we treasure in story ;
 Tom Bowlings, and Jacks,
 Who'll make all cry " pax "
 Who meddle with Old England's glory !

CHARLES AND SALLY RICKETTS.

Poor Sally Ricketts, call'd the drunkard's wife,
 Deserv'd a calmer and a happier life ;
 Not that her husband was the only " chap "
 Who spent his earnings at the village tap ;

For tipplers swarm'd within a parish where
Sobriety, of all things, was most rare !
Hence, when one ask'd for Harry, Bill, or Jack,
Of homely wife, the answer was, " Good lack !
He's been this fortnight out upon the drink,
And how much longer will be I can't think ! "
Sally was a gentle and a tender plant,
The daughter of an old inhabitant ;
A little farmer, but with family large,
From youth she'd been accustom'd to discharge
Life's duties well, and keep a tidy home.
But Charles, her husband, had a beast become ;
Always prepar'd at public-house to stop
When he could get a chance of extra " drop."
Ere eight-and-twenty years had o'er him flown,
Into a bloated, beery sot he'd grown.
No matter whether he could pay his score,
'Twas chalk'd upon the " bar " or " taproom " door ;
So all he earn'd—which should have paid the bill
For food and home supplies—was giv'n to fill
The thriving beer-retailer's greedy " till."
'Tis " bosh " to say the licens'd publican,
If a respectable and steady man,
Temptation-proof, will never heed request
For common swipes, or Barclay, Perkins' best,
From one whose voice and vacant look declare
He's had already more than he can bear.
Oft when I've heard that some are " on again "
Their frequent drinking bouts, my steps are ta'en
To visit quickly, under some pretence,
The " Angel's " landlord in his innocence !
Or him who keeps the " Stag " or " Running Horse,"
And I have found Charles Ricketts in full force,
Have heard him join in accents harsh and coarse
With other beery spirits—tap-room glee
Of triumph in its own peculiar key !

Have seen him at the lush-bespatter'd board
More drunk than ever "fiddler" was, or "lord."
Don't tell me publicans can't "twig" the state
Of well-known drunkard upon whom they wait.
Members for whom they vote deceive they can
With great success, but not "another man."
Charles on a Saturday's early afternoon
His home would reach intoxicated, soon
To rave and curse, and e'en to throw aside
The fare his thoughtful partner would provide;
Him welcoming, as toiling week would close,
Before the coming Sabbath's calm repose.
Then would he smash the scanty crock'ry-ware,
Preserv'd by her in cleanly order there.
Then would he whirl the poker, fork, or knife
At her he'd sworn to cherish throughout life!
Give, as a finish to the rampant flow
Of drunken frenzy, the unmanly blow.
One night was she in pigsty forc'd to seek
(Turn'd out of doors) a shelter from the bleak
And wintry wind, till morning kindly shone,
And Charles to distant early work had gone.
The sty was empty, but a sober hog
Is less offensive than a drunken dog.
Once, after being "on the drink," his brain
Fuddled and thick, he took to bed again.
Hearing his wife was overborne by grief
I sought their cottage with some small relief.
Soon as I enter'd clamour overhead
Confirm'd the news; the savage was in bed,
Rating and cursing at his gentle wife,
Whilst voice of child, with imitation rife,
Repeated ev'ry oath its father swore,
As if such language it had heard before!
Shame on Great Britain! Can it be thy land
That rears the drunkard's and the coward's hand?

While these prevail, to thy reproach and shame,
Be "Little Britain" thy dishonour'd name!
If spread of drunkenness thou canst not stop
With all your education, shut up shop.
Autumnal leaves had fall'n. O'er the vale
A treach'rous mist was rising thick and pale,
The clammy breath of chill'd expiring day
Told the advance of Winter's iron sway,
And as it swept the cheerless grove along,
Bade shiv'ring branches join in mournful song.
Turned by her husband out of house and home,
At such a time did brain-worn Sally come
To seek for friendly counsel at my door
For her poor self and little children four;
For he had sworn, with dark, forbidding frown,
If they return'd, "to mow or shoot them down."
By manner wild and by such threats appall'd
She dar'd not then appear at home, so call'd;
Besides, the best of neighbours living nigh
No help could give, however sad her cry!
In fact, when Charles was so inflam'd with drink,
Policemen would from plainest duty shrink.
In such a sudden, melancholy plight,
I could but press her, for the coming night,
To seek the walls (from which all keep aloof)
And common shelter of the Workhouse roof.
With her young children, crush'd and scar'd by woe,
Sally, unwilling, yet agreed to go.
Soon with the lot I reach'd the Union door,
And gave them over to the governor.
Hard was the struggle, with resistance stout,
To gain consent to take a summons out;
At last she yielded, in her desperate state,
And Charles was brought before the magistrate.
The rest is quickly told. The case was prov'd,
And he is then to county gaol remov'd,

For one month's labour, and it serv'd him right.
Soon as his steps had pac'd the prison ground,
Gossip dispers'd alarming news around;
So dreadful ! all, excepting very few,
Felt " certain sure " such tidings must be true !
Charles, before many, awful oaths had made
" That if to prison he should be convey'd,
All who had meddl'd betwixt self and wife
He'd maim and injure for the rest of life."
And many said " that I was safe to feel
The force of his revenge in lead or steel."
Three months at least had pass'd, 'twas Sabbath day,
And I to parish church pursued my way
Along by-paths, through fields of varied green,
Enjoying Nature in the calmest scene—
The cheering breeze of soul-inspiring spring—
So soon to flee before the exulting wing
Of summer nigh ; then down secluded lane,
Between " God's Acre " and the upland plain,
Where, after frequent turnings left and right,
A labourer's form came suddenly in sight.
No thought recurred of Ricketts, or that he
(His sentence serv'd) upon the world was free.
More fleet of foot on fast-continued pace,
I soon o'ertook the man in that lone place.
He turn'd ! 'twas Charles ! and we stood face to face.
" Kind sir," quoth he, " as sure as that's a bell
Now calling all to pray'r, I ne'er can tell
The friend that thou hast really been to me,
To my poor wife, and little family !
No beer I tasted while on prison fare,
And now for drink I've not the slightest care !
All the good chaplain read and taught to me,
Praise be to God ! has not been lost, you see ;
For since return'd to my old cottage floor
I have not been within a beerhouse door,

Nor tavern tap ; nor have these lips once had
A drop of beer or spirits, good or bad ;
And I'm resolv'd from such to keep them clear,
A teetotaller till death stays my career."
His eyelids fill'd. " Oh, let me take that hand ! "
He said, " for now I'm happiest in the land ! "
Our palms soon met, and I felt nigh unmann'd ;
Then with poor Charles, to whom new life was giv'n,
I turn'd my steps toward the gate of heaven.
He was an alter'd being, neat and clean,
Few would believe the drunkard he had been.
In manner civil, and in conduct just,
In him might all employers place full trust ;
Willing to work, and working " with a will,"
His wage no longer giv'n to beerhouse till.
Next Sunday evening to his cot I went
To show respect, when, to my heart's content,
I found the family at homely tea,
With faces bright and happy as could be ;
Wife by his side, and infant on his knee.
A few may ask, in this fast-going age, [page ? "
" What stopp'd his course and turn'd his hist'ry's
The answer's plain ; it takes but one short line—
" The common prison and its discipline ; "
Here is another striking instance found
Of seed ne'er sown upon the best of ground.
Where there's no culture, who can hope to stay
The growth of weed ? 'twill have its noxious way !
Ask Sally Ricketts—ask her but to name
The last fine day when any parson came
To her abode. She'll state not since the day
When her young daughter Susan pass'd away—
Eight years ago ! No wonder, then, that drink
Triumphant reigns ; it makes one sad to think
Of souls neglected ; scatter'd sheep ne'er seen,
Where watchful shepherd's eye hath never been

To seek for them, and bring them back controll'd
By love, in safety to the *one* true fold.

SERVANTS.

THE village could its specimens display
Of what is still, in this enlighten'd day,
"Domestic servant" call'd—a term too mild
For beings so uncertain, fast, and wild ;
So fond of change, of ev'ry duty shy,
Thinking perfection they personify ;
While for their selfish ends alone they strive,
And from domestic life all comfort drive.
Take, for example, any servant "gal"
In quiet country town, or gay "Pall Mall,"
Rejoicing when she's spoilt the polish'd grates,
And broken all your glass, and half your plates !
"What odds to her ? 'tis very good for trade,
And master has a *pot* of money made !"
Of all conceited, careless things "now out,"
Mark as "Lot one," without the slightest doubt,
Domestic servants, taken as a class
Of working people—man, or boy, or lass—
They all now take their duty quite at ease,
Go out at all times, wheresoe'er they please.
And it is said in garrison towns, "A girl
Will give a common soldier coin, to twirl
Her graceful figure through the gayest streets !
And this is why, no doubt, one often meets
The ugliest-looking damsel by the side
Of man in scarlet (beaming like a bride),
Some clean and handsome youthful "Corporal Trim"—

A *common* ornament indeed to him !
If such, or " Linesman," thus can earn a " bob,"
What gets a " Serjeant " for the self-same job ?
If he should be in " Horse Guards " or the " Blues,"
She may to him a " florin " not refuse.
Or if a " Lancer " smart, " Artilleryman " fine
Offer his arm, she'll add a look divine,
To prance about on Sundays, gaily dress'd,
With jewels rare, whilst medals deck their chest.
Now " Jeams " will ask three times his weight in wage,
Or else in service he will not engage !
Will have his amber ale to please the eye
As well as taste—a plentiful supply ;
And must be trusted, as an honest " feller,"
With parlour sideboard key as well as cellar ;
Have every other Sunday evening free,
" Health to preserve, and seek society ! "
To take a turn with Mary Jane or Hannah,
And smoke his " Bristol Bird's Eye," or " Havana."
Now Madam Cook expects her thirty pound,
And often more per ann., with all else found—
Including washing, tea and sugar, beer,
A fortnight's holiday within the year ;
And she will have it clearly understood
That poultry forms a part of kitchen food ;
And fish at times, not only herrings red
But cod, and salmon in the Severn bred !
That ev'ry Sunday eve shall be her own,
To go to meeting or to meet her John ;
And should she have a pet from " Isle of Skye,"
To have it with her she will firmly try.
Thanks to the rapidly increasing force
Of education in its onward course,
There's scarcely any man throughout the nation,
Compell'd to work, contented with his station ;
All must possess more knowledge than the store

Enjoy'd by any gifted ancestor !
Each wealth must gain and fame, by some new plan,
Quickly get great or else a *striking* man !
And, as the progress of the age gets faster,
Soon none will serve, but ev'ry one be master !
You want a servant, and you want in vain ;
" Plain cook," perhaps, to dish a dinner plain ;
And she *will* "*dish it*" very soon for you,
Whether a roasted joint or Irish stew,
A Christmas turkey or September goose,
With pie or pudding well supplied with juice,
As raspberry and currant, or if wholly
Damson or cherry, or a " roly poly."
To aid your views, a neighbour ask, or friend,
But one to suit they cannot recommend.
Perchance you'll hear " a girl of Widow Dyer
A situation wants—you can but try her !
As yet she has but ' maid-of-all-work ' been
At Farmer Rough's, and barely seventeen."
Mother will say, " our Betsy scholard is,"
While Bet will raise her educated phiz,
Wriggle, and smirk, as if to let you know
Her own clear trumpet she's been taught to blow.
But " pretty scholard " soon will come to grief,
She can't darn stockings, hem a handkerchief !
And should you dare to say, " she's much to learn,"
Her *feelings* will with indignation burn !
Our parlour-maid writes letters by the dozen
To dear relations—commonly a *cousin* !
And pens sweet lines with skilful hand, and free,
To him with whom she lends her company,
And walks in state each Sunday afternoon
Till stars appear, or shines the gentle moon.
My plain cook now, to imitate her betters,
Daily sits down to answer morning letters !
Work throws aside—for that she does not care—

And says, if blam'd, "she'll find a place elsewhere."
She dresses neatly, wears a watch and chain,
Which makes her fellows stare, and stare again ;
While "Jeams," the butler, eyes her like a dove,
Controll'd by something more than cupboard love !
Declares "her form and countenance complete !
The former graceful, and the latter sweet !
That her soft hair had well repaid her toil."
"Lawk," she replied, "'tis all through master's oil,
The best of salad ; nothing does so well !
The growth it strengthens, gives delicious smell !
And, when 'tis mix'd with dripping, always got,
It fills with best of grease my gallipot,
Trouble there's none," and added, "cooks have rights !
And these things are among her perquisites."
My kitchen-maid, a gown of rich ponceau,
On Sunday sports to prance about with Joe,
The blacksmith's son. Her bonnet green and bright,
With streamers waving from "top-gallant" height
O'er glossy rounds of red luxuriant hair,
Oil'd with the fat of last-imported bear !
And "why should she not dignify her place
In French merino, finish'd off with lace ?"
And why not all her ornaments display,
In varied style on Sabbath holiday ?
Replete with taste, of classical design,
Suiting her features masculine and fine !
A chain and locket, brooch well plac'd in view,
Eardrops of latest fashion, chaste and new,
All *purest gold* from "Brummagem's" supply,
Form'd to attract the village sweetheart's eye.
Such is the rigging gentle "Hem'ly" wears,
Reliev'd from work and all domestic cares.
My groom, refin'd with talents rare and pure,
Had for her deafness got the "perfect cure."
Smoke from tobacco puff'd into her ear,

Would clear the way and make her plainly hear,
"To some," he said, "the treatment strange might
But he had learnt the properties of steam [seem,
At *National* school, and never had forgot
Its wondrous pow'r from kettle or from pot!"
One summer eve, when lounging by the rear
Of croquet lawn, in shelter'd orchard near,
I saw on rustic seat th' afflicted fair!
John holding back her freed and wand'ring hair,
While puffing fumes, with more of love than fear,
Of "Bristol Bird's Eye" in his patient's ear!
How long she'd been in her new *situation*,
Under the pow'r of the operation,
I could not tell; but ere I reach'd the spot,
His Daphne had as drunk as Chloe got!
Fit subject for an orchard's quiet part—
Poor silly victim of a "*scholard's*" art!
Go where you will a servant to engage,
'Tis hard to find them in this *learnèd* age!
Youths you will meet well up to "this and that,"
Who will not condescend to touch their hat.
Maidens array'd in silks and muslins rare,
With parasols, complexions soft and fair
To well protect from too much dust and glare;
But as for servants humble and polite,
Go search the moon, or through the orbs of night!
Turn, then, your steps among the aged poor,
Soon as you stand upon their cottage floor,
So soon you'll see if either man or wife
Domestic servants were in early life;
Though never skill'd in grammar, tense, or mood,
Nor had they heard of any longitude,
Nor anything of literature polite!
They had been taught to fairly read and write,
To know their duty to their God, to trust
In Him alone, to honest be and just.

Such were Old England's servants, long before
The schoolmaster abroad, from richest store,
Dispers'd instruction with a lavish hand,
For every poor man's child throughout the land.
Servants, to win esteem as well as wage,
Worthy a little place in hist'ry's page ;
But all have vanish'd, and to me 'tis plain
That none " will look upon their like again."

THE WOOLCOMBES.

OLD Jesse Woolcombe by the common side
An antique cot for years had occupied ;
Of notions quaint, he led a quiet life
With his *two-thirds* a useful sort of wife.
His dwelling rested in remotest part
Of Flirton Croft ; but there, with horse and cart,
And few good pigs, he managed with his pension
To push along without the least contention.
'Twas three good miles, o'er roughish road and moor,
To parish church from his old cottage door,
So as his age was near threescore and ten,
He could but only get there now and then.
So nearest meeting-house he enter'd in
To pray for mercy and confess his sin.
There oft one Job, a famous blacksmith, preach'd,
Whose fame the country round some miles had reach'd,
Whose ample lungs could well his views enforce,
"*Hammer and tongs*" supporting his discourse.
Many admirers after him would run,
And sev'ral thought him a decided *gun* ;
While many others, with *uncommon* grace,

Call'd him the "Canon" of his native place.
Now Woolcombe once a soldier bold had been,
And hence it could be very quickly seen
Why he should like to hear the blacksmith more
Than parson "Growlitt," for in days of yore
Jesse was us'd to *guns'* and *canons'* roar.
To Flirton Croft had Nature been most kind,
A healthier parish 'twould be hard to find ;
In rich and cheerful clothing ever dress'd,
The water purest, and the air the best.
Then why so many seen upon the vale
With crippled joints and countenances pale ?
The vicar had not long inducted been,
When he would take his walk o'er meadows green ;
Soon he arrived at Jesse Woolcombe's cot.
"Come in," he cried ; "we are a *common* lot,
By common-side ; be zeated, zir, and free."
Says Mrs. Woolcombe, "Hubby, can't *you* see
'Tis our new wicker come ?" "Of course," said he,
"And I am glad your honour's called on we."
Of late he'd had an illness most severe,
And then had reach'd his seventy-second year.
Much 'gainst the wishes of his good old gal,
He'd been in London, at an hospital.
The doctors saw no reason for his state,
Except foul water would the like create,
Or impure air ; and all of them would not
Believe the old man lived in healthy spot.
At home return'd, the vicar would complain
To parish officers, but all in vain ;
They turn'd on him a deaf ear precious cool,
As if a skill'd impostor, or a fool.
The day was warm ; the vicar from his home
A greater distance than he thought had come ;
With feelings faint, no breath of fresh'ning breeze,
"A drop," he asks, "of water, if you please."

“Water!” exclaims both Woolcombe and his wife,
“’Tis *pison*, zir, and will destroy your life.
All that you see a-running round us here
We never drink, although at times ’tis clear;
What we require a neighbour’s child doth bring
At evening’s close, from yonder distant spring.
I’m sorry, zir, we’ve not a drop that’s pure,
Or you’d be welcome, you may feel quite sure;
I’ll fetch you some, your honour, if you please,
But then good while you’ll have to *stand at ease*.
For as to marching, I am ’bout as slow
As them ’ere beasts they send to cattle show—
But not so fat. And this old slender body
Is hard to carry straight, though free from toddy.
’Tis crying shame that wholesome drinking water
The better folk pollute for this here quarter.”
At this the vicar’s tender heart began
To pulse more quickly—kind, good-natured man!—
And he resolv’d next day with zeal and care
(Should all be well) to weed the story bare.
Herculean task! for all who paid a rate
Knew better drainage would expense create;
So some who lived within the upland quarter,
Supplied from constant springs with purest water,
Car’d not what filth descended to the vale—
Polluting streams, and causing health to fail.
From Flirton Croft the foulest refuse fell,
O’er sloping ground, to where the village well
Join’d a stream the highway side, and thence
Spread o’er the lowlands like a pestilence.
So first at “Whitsend Lane” (appropriate name),
Surrounding refuse, it would seem to claim
To form a constant and convenient pond,
To hold supplies for many a home beyond;
And all the filth of man and beast was there
As if collected with the strictest care.

The vicar soon commenc'd with good intent
His thankless duty. Wheresoe'er he went
He tried to make the hearts of many feel
For injur'd poor, but found them hard as steel.
Men who rejoic'd to be on liberal side,
Talk'd of reform, and progress, far and wide,
Of poor man's rights his fellow-men among ;
But if to really aid the labouring throng
They had to pay, adieu to their sweet song.
To all inquiries he'd the same reply—
" The poor of Flirton Croft but rarely die.
A hardy lot ! and very healthy place,
To growl 'bout water, who can have the face ?
For well 'tis known our people, far and near,
Will take no water while they get their beer ! "
" Oh ! " says the vicar, " but for home supply
Fair Nature's gift no mortal should deny.
Besides, the reason which you seem to give
Would show that all your poorer neighbours live
The drunkard's life. Too many do, I fear ;
But they should still have purest water near."
Then some would say, " Convenient springs they've got,
A lazy, dirty, discontented lot !
Old Woolcombe's told you his blood-poison'd state.
If you take up his cause there'll be a rate—
Full heavy too—in which you'll have to share ;
When goodness knows we have enough to bear !
For what with *tithes* and poor-rate, income tax,
We soon shan't have a coat upon our backs.
And as no more, not e'en for health, we'll pay,
We pray thee, then, this drainage question stay ;
And would suggest that you will follow one
Plain duty, sir, and stick to that alone."
Thus were the vicar's best exertions stopp'd,
Thus was the interesting subject dropp'd.
Soon after this small-pox of desperate sort

Was by a female to the village brought—
One who, for gross misconduct, had been shut
Out from the world ; by friends and neighbours cut.
And she her hope declar'd " that each one might
Catch the disease—'twould serve them jolly right."
Her wish of spite so vile was not denied—
Her careworn father first took ill and died.
Infection spread ; the place became alarm'd ;
The doctor did his duty ; yet unarm'd
Was Flirton Croft to meet so fierce a foe,
Advancing quickly, and with deadly blow.
Loud for assistance was her piteous cry—
The unionhouse had no infirmary.
One morn sad tidings to the vicar came—
A lad was lying dead, John Bunce by name ;
The foetid body in the closest room,
His father sick, and sinking to the tomb—
A fearful sight—upon the same rough floor,
And in that dwelling there were many more.
No coffin from the workhouse could they get
Until the guardians of the poor had met ;
Thus days of terror caused a great delay,
While Death was reigning with relentless sway.
Bunce had no money ! Nothing he could call
His own to pledge to pay for funeral.
He was the husband of the only child
Of Jesse Woolcombe, who, with trouble wild,
Would storm the workhouse, by devotion led,
Demanding coffin for his grandson dead ;
The form he lov'd and valued as his own,
Was that to be on common dunghheap thrown ?
Care for the " guardian's power he had no more
Than for the rule of union governor."
" And so he told him, and he'd never yield
An inch of ground, as if on battle-field,
Till one of them the better man was prov'd,

Or he'd a coffin for the lad he'd lov'd."
"Come, come," said Woolcombe, "act like Briton free,
And on your own responsibility ;
Be sure, you ne'er can come to grief, because
You break, in such a case, the union laws.
The land that I've fought for never can demur
To give a little piece of elm or fir
At such a time, that pauper corpse might come
In decent order to a pauper's tomb.
Come, come, I say ; the longest life's a span ;
Do this good deed, and prove yourself a man."
The gov'rnor, struck with Woolcombe's grave intent,
Pluck'd up his courage, and a coffin sent.
The vicar, suffering from his late defeat
On drainage question, knew not where to beat
For ready aid, so to his lawyer went,
A man of action and of firm intent.
"The case," he said, "was urgent, and he'd write
Straight to the Board of Health that very night ;
Soon would it bring the guardians to their senses,
Put them in form regardless of expenses.
Should they still flinch, or dawdle in debate,
They'd find the Board, like small-pox, would not wait.
Return of post brought orders and directions,
Rules to disperse with threat'nings of inspections ;
And though no client Lawyer Squibb employ'd,
Work for the public good he much enjoy'd.
Each local magistrate instructions had,
The union clerk was well-nigh driven mad.
Most were arousd as if by earthquake shock'd,
And things recover'd from their late deadlock.
Strange now to state, the cheerful news soon spread,
The fell invader suddenly had fled ;
A few mild cases only then remain'd,
And Flirton Croft her normal state regain'd.
Rapid the change ! But an impending rate,

Caus'd by an order to investigate,
Alarm'd the pockets and the minds of all
Much more than scourge—and so the potent call
Of "Board of Health" upon the parish dons
Made them discard at once their "pros and cons,"
And freely promise that, without delay,
They would all orders of the Board obey.
Thus might they save the burthen of a rate,
Too much to bear, or e'en to contemplate.
Promise was giv'n to provide a place
At union house for each suspicious case
Of fever, or of lurking pestilence ;
Precaution being far the best defence
Against such enemies, so bold, so sure,
Although their ways are secret, course obscure.
Promise to build an out-house, or a shed,
Fit for the bodies of the casual dead.
Promise forsooth ! 'Twas only for the ear !
For, since that sickly season, year on year
Has pass'd, and opportunities have gone
For doing good ; but nothing has been done,
Naught but resentment 'gainst old Woolcombe dealt,
Till close of life, which he in silence felt.
Soon he found out he'd giv'n extreme offence
To men of local power and influence ;
They look'd on him as dangerous to the nation,
As one too independent for his station.
Thought he was much too "well-to-do" to be
Worthy a share of parish charity ;
So when infirmity and age came on,
None went to see him and his good wife Joan.
Yet he ne'er begg'd, not e'en when strength had fled,
Leaving him powerless to earn his bread.
Thus, deep affection for the boy he lov'd,
Brought on his ruin ; but with pluck unmov'd,
He fought life's battle out with manly pride ;

And friends and foes admitted when he died
“That truer Briton ne’er was seen on earth
Than Jesse Woolcombe, though of humble birth.”
Such is the way some poor are kept in view,
’Tis true—’tis pity! Pity ’tis ’tis true!

DOCTOR.

WITHOUT the doctor, to his post so true,
What would the village and the parish do?
Where would fond mother for her children go
When sick? or father with the gout in toe?
Fearless in kind, with Esculapian art,
At any hour of night see Bolus start
(Aroused from sleep by some excited swain
To face the sleet across the barren plain),
Some suffering creature to relieve from pain!
Should small-pox or malignant fever come,
With lep’rous breath infecting many a home,
You will not find the doctor shirk or flee
From path of duty, or of charity.
Yet thankless office his; from day to day
No end of work, with very little pay!
Oft upon foot or horseback must he prance,
To see dame “Rolling” in her “viper’s” dance,
Or “Blowfield’s” daughter with her bad “digestion;”
Or else his conduct very soon they’d question.
And should old “Croaker” be more ill than they,
Of course he must to her more visits pay,
Which makes their jealousy begin to sport
And very soon send round a false report,

That Bolus has his favourites 'mong the sick,
And does not fairly to his patients stick.
Gossip takes care the invention does not fail,
And many a fool believes the idle tale.
How oft with him must some their secrets place
In many a special yet a common case !
How many a family matter doth he know
Which must not on the public carpet show.
Scandal is ripe enough, but should he tell
All that he sees and hears, what increas'd swell
Of trouble and confusion would arise
To stir up strife and scatter strongest ties ;
And yet the doctor oft must think it hard
That few for him show little real regard.
Besides small gain from practice general
Among the gentry—kind old boy or “ gal ”—
As “ Union ” doctor with a “ friendly club,”
He finds a pittance through the world to rub ;
Makes both ends meet by most uncommon skill,
And well deserves respect and right good will.
A rising and increasing family made
Poor Bolus anxious to improve his trade.
So one fine day (and him there's none should blame)
“ Nuisance Inspector ” he by law became.
This added something to his income, yet
He soon look'd on his office with regret.
For stating “ Sliplop ” ought to cleanse his drains,
A patient cost the doctor for his pains !
And as for Farmer “ Quickset,” as he had
To clear a cesspool very foul and bad,
He with the inspector quarrel'd, and no more
Took his advice or “ mixture as before.”
'Tis very fine in these improving days
To make the general public mend their ways ;
'Tis very good for health and moral state ;
But Mr. Public will not pay a rate.

Rather than any such a tax should come
He'd run the chance of poisoning every home.
As Bolus found his practice would decline
His office he did very soon resign.
The "Public Nuisance Act" made him look grim,
For it had proved a *private* one to him.
From long experience I do fail to see
That special law will give facility
To any one who would cleanse or purify
The tainted air of undrain'd town or place,
If local government the cause must trace !
Most rural nobbs and snobs delight to be
Possess'd of influence and authority,
But flinch to make reforms in downright way
If they as well as others have to pay.
Rest, rest assur'd, all ye who would secure
Improvements to the dwellings of the poor !
Health to the thousands living much like beasts,
While wealth increases, and the great man feasts !
Pure air and water—Nature's own supply
Which some to others often will deny.
Nought can be done till fact, the greatest tutor,
Th' appointment gains of public prosecutor.
Such wants 'bout which so many people prate,
In language strong, and at a liberal rate,
Will soon promote a cry for better laws ;
And they who wish to aid the poor man's cause
Must make to Parliament his claim more telling,
For greater comfort in his humble dwelling.
Still, truth must state that in too many cases
Where larger cottages in several places
Have been provided for his family,
The extra rooms have been kept wholly free
For letting, to bring in the £ s. d. !
Results so great will never be acquired
Till moral courage has the souls inspired

Of those who rule supreme throughout the land,
With power to force whate'er the laws command.
And they will surely hold the reins of state
Who treat the small as fairly as the great.

KATE AND ERNEST.

GILES TOPPINGS had an only daughter dear,
Who'd lived to enter on her eighteenth year;
Five other pets he'd had, his joy and pride,
But all had with the best of mothers died,
And he some nine or ten long years had been
Alone with Kate to brighten home's dimmed scene.
And though she struggled with an aching heart
To do her duty in a trying part,
She could not find, with all her love and grace,
Aught that could fill the desolated place
Remorseless death had spread within her home,
Where she desired no further care should come
To best of fathers, so that toiling day
Might pass from him in quietude away.
At Flirton Croft not far from "Fairmead Gate,"
Extensive mills he'd work'd to profit great.
An active man with most industrious will,
Of business habits and possessing skill,
His course from start in life had soon improv'd,
And 'mong the highest ranks for years had mov'd
Of county trade, and ever found correct,
He'd gained from all who knew him much respect;
A useful man in parish work beside,

He'd gained good reputation far and wide—
Indeed, a worthier man could not be found
Than Miller Toppings, search the country round.
Now Ernest John, the squire's son and heir,
The miller's daughter lov'd, so good and fair.
And ever since that early summer morn,
When first they met upon his father's lawn,
And stroll'd through shrub'ry pathsto Fairmead Grove,
Attracted by the small bird's call of love,
He'd giv'n the maid to fully understand
He'd one day make her happiest in the land.
From girlhood's dawn he'd heard of all the share
Of useful knowledge by a father's care,
With anxious thought and hope on her bestow'd
To serve her well on Nature's varied road,
And knew beside from every neighbour's tongue
Her many virtues though in age so young.
The squire's family party were from home
The year that Ernest tempted Kate to come
Within its choice and pretty boundary, where
The house was emptied for complete repair.
The only couple living near the place
Was gardener Jenkins and his good wife Grace.
And Ernest John was only there a day
Or so at most upon his hurried way
To college, but it gave him chance to see
His own dear girl from observation free ;
Besides the cautious couple would not tell
Tales about him—they knew their place too well.
Still rumours reach'd, as sly as they were fleet,
The father's ears "his son was indiscreet,"
And e'en reports were spread from one snug quarter
That he would shortly wed the miller's daughter.
The squire then plann'd a thorough stopper to
So bold a venture, matrimonial view ;
And soon decided with a firm intent

That Ernest should upon the Continent
Have two years' touring, which no doubt would bring
A blight upon this courtship in its spring ;
Such bud of love must have no ripening breath,
But, like to sickly flow'r, the earliest death.
Whether poor Kate and Ernest oft could meet
Ere he had turn'd from home unwilling feet
None ever knew, but gossip freely said
" They often had ; and certainly would wed
Before two years had hurried o'er their head ! "
So too, if Kate bore up 'gainst sorrow well,
None knew ; but she was not the girl to tell
Nor yet hide grief from ev'ry neighbour's eye,
When many lov'd her and would not deny
To one so good their deepest sympathy !
Some eighteen months had pass'd but not a word
Of their attachment was by neighbours heard ;
All seem'd dispos'd to let the subject sleep,
Or else its course, like " silent streams, was deep ; "
When one fine morning best of news arriv'd
That Kate's rich uncle, who at Melbourne liv'd,
Had left his wealth to brother Giles outright,
Which gave to her and many friends delight.
Income increas'd by some ten thousand pound
Would soon be known the neighbourhood around,
And elevate his station upon earth,
While all would soon forget his humble birth.
The crisis reach'd, his uncle tried his best
To get back Ernest to the family nest,
And urged his brother " not to spiteful prove
Against a loving youth who dar'd to love !
If opposition too should be severe ;
Might it not bring the threatening nuptials near ?
Leave them to take their own and natural course
Since all must wed ' for better and for worse,'
And oft 'tis found that girls in humble station

Make as good wives as any in the nation !
Besides the change has not improv'd the health
Of Ernest, whilst Giles Toppings stores up wealth,
And soon retiring from his trade will be
Receiv'd within the best society !
Added to this might not dear Ernest stray
In far more dangerous paths while far away
Than those between his home and Fairmead Gate ?
Where harmless lives the miller's daughter Kate."
The squire replied : " Good brother, let me wait
A day or so and I will cogitate
On all you've said. He's been a gentle youth,
His tongue is quiet and his lips speak truth ;
And often it will drive me nearly mad
To think he's left us and his mother sad.
And Giles is known to be as kind as just,
A man deserving of esteem and trust,
Within four days from this I will convey
My resolution to you, come what may ;
'Tis hard that love a parent's home should sever,
But such delay can cause no harm whatever !"
Next morn the squire, too full of thought for sleep
Throughout the previous night, his word did keep,
Wrote to his son to come without delay
Back to his home where all in happiest way
Would welcome him, without a thought of blame,
And home would not be happy till he came.
Too late ! These words could not have reach'd his
hand
When tidings came which terrified the land,
" That two young Englishmen had been just ta'en
By fierce Italian bandit and were slain,
Because they tried to make escape by flight,
And fought the guard that watch'd them during night."
Soon 'twas confirm'd—the two were Ernest John,
Beloved by all, and his companion.

The rest is short, though full of grief, to tell
Fond parents' hearts were broken, with the spell
Which hangs o'er loving homes, to some known well !
And dear young Kate, she could not stand a blow
So sharp and sudden ; overcome with woe,
Consumption, planted in her tender breast,
Develop'd quickly, and she sank to rest.

CHRISTMAS EVE.

'Twas Christmas eve—the village, calm and chill,
Above the snow-clad ground no sign of ill,
No sound to brave the nipping air ; beyond
The school-boy's call upon the frozen pond,
And carols greeting upon twilight's fall
In infant notes the coming festival ;
While smoke ascending straight from cottage flue,
In light and fleecy columns ever new,
Gave sign of life and comfort through the air
In shapes fantastic and in circlets fair.
Such was the scene as winter's day would close
On many looking for a short repose
By social hearths lighthearted, if not gay,
To keep in love the year's great holiday,
And there with neighbours, if not kindred dear,
To greet old Christmas with a hearty cheer ;
When all are startl'd by a sudden sound
Which soon creates confusion all around,
And worst forebodings quickly spread around,
As o'er the vale is borne with shriek and moan
The wildest message in the saddest tone—
A train o'erthrown upon the ice-bound land,
No shelter near, no small relief at hand !

Off, at the instant friends and neighbours start
Their aid to give, with quickly beating heart
And eager footsteps, hastening as they go,
Attracted by the increasing sound of woe—
Soon are their fears confirm'd ; and soon they prove
That parts remote have stores of neighbour's love.
All do their best to soothe in torturing hour
Each wounded traveller, but lack the power.
Mid ghastly forms that dim the pitying eye
Is one borne home by kindred watching nigh,
And grief-struck friends with tend'rest care—
'Tis Michael Goodwin's mangl'd form they bear ;
His poor old mother, following through the snow,
Reckless and scar'd by such a blast of woe.
Michael had dwelt for years on distant shore,
And now return'd to native land once more.
With Christmas near he lost no time to come
And spend it happily in his old dear home.
His father had been taken to his rest,
But still with fondest mother he was bless'd.
Fast is the age, and faster ev'ry day
Man must be borne upon the world's highway ;
For time is money—money leads to power,
And if we move at thirty miles an hour,
Why not at sixty, or at whirlwind rate ?
In search of fortune none can estimate.
Thus bent, and lost in scientific pride,
Prudence and common sense are cast aside ;
Speed is put on, and wires electric nigh
To restless beings seem to prophesy
That they will soon command the power to fly !
So trains, when late, are started off like mirth,
To bear how many to a Christmas hearth !
Too few, perhaps, whilst many lov'd and dear
Are thrown to perish where no help is near,
In wintry night, their shroud the bleaching snow

On Nature's face. Alas ! that scene of woe
So harrowing should to Flirton Croft have come,
And spread deep gloom o'er many a cheerful home.
Slowly the shock of horror pass'd away,
But few will e'er forget that fatal day ;
The grave event made many deeply think
The more of life's short span, and others shrink
From thoughts which would recall to mind a scene
Which had so painful and destructive been !
The Christmas passed, with dull and heavy heart
The steady labourer turn'd to take his part
In keeping live stock from the piercing cold,
The cattle hous'd and sheep in shelter'd fold
With straw and fodder, well supplied to meet
The nipping breath of winter charg'd with sleet,
Though hands and feet benumb'd and shivering form
Make it a painful duty to perform,
While in his lonely room, obscure, retir'd,
The parish minstrel is again inspired !
Jim Dobbs, unknown to fortune and to fame,
Simple and plain as his plebeian name,
The village tailor as he stitch'd away,
With thread and needle sang his annual lay.
Jim would not boast, and yet he thought that he
Possess'd the priceless gift of poetry,
Regretting oft he was not taught among
Lads of a higher class when he was young,
And so had learnt, when sharing manly sport,
To give expression to inventive thought ;
He fancied, too, the muse by nature kind,
Was born in him to elevate his mind ;
And help to keep dull care from weary head
While toiling hard to earn his daily bread.
" For was not taste for verse and minstrel's lay
Display'd by gifted father in his day ? "
A taste which would with daily labour chime,

And shew some reason in his simple rhyme ;
So he would often to his friends submit
Some few short lines he called " a pretty bit,"
For their approval in a tone of voice
Which seemed to say " they must pronounce them
choice."

TO THE LILY.

I LOVE thee, maiden of the vale,
So sweet and fair, and yet so pale,
But not with grief ; for thou dost come
With summer morn devoid of gloom.

With thy return the gayest dress
Fond Nature wears of happiness.
I love thy smile so soft and sweet.
It cheers the way for wandering feet.

Thy graceful form, from dells of love
Escaping, decks the scene above ;
Delights the eye wherever view'd,
And lends a charm to solitude.

TO A FAVOURITE MAGPIE.

Poor Jack we ne'er shall see again,
With all his ways so frank ;
He died of water on the brain
Caus'd from a water tank !

Think not because his end was such
He was too fond of drink ;
Of course he got a " drop too much,"
From falling in a sink !

Fine feathers make fine birds, 'tis said ;
But yet he had no lack
Of Nature's rarer gifts—He's dead,
And all must mourn " poor Jack."

These songs recited with expression neat,
He added others from the Muse's seat,
And always one he thought among the best,
If choice to him would be allowed to rest ;
" For though," he said, " to many it might seem
A trifling effort on a common theme,
It pleas'd him greatly, as it plainly show'd
The purest feeling. Thus the verses flow'd.

HOME.

As ivy twines around the tree
In firm and fond embrace,
So clings the heart as faithfully
To life's best dwelling-place.

Hard times may break the strongest tie,
Make friendships soon decay ;
But " home " will live in memory
Till all has pass'd away.

Jim having giv'n these lines in warmest tone
Of filial love, which, he was proud to own,

"Had never cool'd, though many years had fled
Since his good father took to Nature's bed ;"
Gave to his friends with every wish sincere,
His annual carol for the closing year.
"'Twas all compos'd," he said, "before the day
When Michael Goodwin wildly pass'd away.
But if it had not been, a storm which cast
O'er Flirton Croft a cloud which long would last,
Could not have been referr'd to in a lay
Design'd by him to cheer on Christmas day."
And such the wish which from the heart would flow
Of poor Jim Dobbs, the following lines may show !

WATCHING OLD YEAR OUT AND NEW ONE IN.

HEAR ye unmov'd the midnight chime
That wafts away the waning year ?
While lessening moments of old Time
Would make his speed more quick appear,
And age exclaim with wrinkl'd brow,
"You never fled so fast as now !"

"Old Time"—and why ? for young as e'er
He tarries not and wearies never ;
Each moment brings him more to bear,
And yet he flies as fast as ever ;
The same as when in childhood view'd,
He knows of no decrepitude !

Hear ye untouch'd the merry peal
That welcomes in, as moments fly,

The new-born year ? All, all must feel
Its spirit-stirring harmony !
While Youth exclaims with careless mien,
“What matters time ? ’tis never seen !”

“Unseen !” quoth Age, “and yet those bells
That chime the closing year away
Bring back some thoughts from Mem’ry’s cells
That time-worn spirits would delay—
So peal, peal on, ye midnight bells,
Whate’er the tale your music tells.”

’Tis sweet to hear their changes come
With tones of many a loving voice,
With all the harmony of home
Which bade both young and old rejoice ;
So now upon the tranquil air
No sign appears of coming care.

The merry stars would seem to cheer
The close of night ; the coming day
To promise that the new-born year
Would prosp’rous be and fair and gay ;
But Time has nothing sure save speed,
And therefore, gentle heart, take heed.

CO-OPERATIVE STORES.

RETURNING home one summer eve at five,
I found the grocer’s general shop alive
With working men, for they had means to pay,
Their weekly wage received. ’Twas Saturday.
Noisy they were, in conversation free

'Bout stores now form'd by public company.
 "I'm glad to see you, sir," the grocer said—
 Dempster by name—and with a bowing head,
 "For you, we know, can give opinion sound
 Upon these schemes which spring up all around,
 So hard on all engaged in honest trade.
 I know, good sir, they don't receive your aid."
 Silence proclaim'd, all seem'd dispos'd to wait
 Whilst my opinion I should plainly state.
 Dempster display'd a smile which seem'd to say,
 He knew my views would all incline his way,
 And that I would assist in putting down
 Co-operative stores in ev'ry town.
 "'Tis true," I said, "that I so freely give
 My custom still to tradesmen where I live;
 For I consider it but just and fair
 To give support to those that have to bear
 Taxes and rates that are impos'd on trade
 Before the slightest profit has been made:
 Men who have not the money to compete
 With public companies with 'tills replete,'
 Subscribed by many living here and there,
 Unknown to trade, and strangers to its care!
 Besides, in country places where the trade
 Is far too dull for profits to be made,
 Except by slow degrees, 'tis hard that some
 Should fail as former customers to come
 To neighbour Dempster's well-stock'd shop, I'll say,
 Just for example, but are led away
 To stores, where goods are said to be so cheap,
 All buyers must a great advantage reap.
 The tradesman, too, doth help to pay the rates,
 Whilst he for little bill with patience waits,
 Subscribes to save poor neighbours from a loss,
 Through sudden accidents to cow or horse;
 And then the parson looks to him to be

A sure supporter of each charity.
For these and other reasons I maintain,
We should to local tradesmen true remain."
"Well done!" cried most, while Dempster jump'd with
glee,
Stating, "if I would stand he'd vote for me
At next election; for a chance I'd give
For trade to thrive, and honest men to live."
Then list'ners, with a most delighted eye,
Paid down their cash with liberality,
While grocer's man and young apprentice placed
Each parcel sold in paper full of taste.
Dame Partlet took her weekly pound of rice,
Butter and candles, all at credit price;
Whilst Widow Saveall, busy as a bee,
Paid ready money for her snuff and tea;
Giles Jolt the ploughman bought an ounce or two
Of "pig-tail" he was ever wont to chew;
And cobbler Patcham would his coppers pay
For "screws" of "shag" to fill his yard of clay.
All for the time seem'd satisfied and pleased
To be by Dempster of their money eased,
While he, with gracious smile, or rather grin,
Thank'd me for having "timely enter'd in
His crowded shop, and there been pleased to give
Reasons so plain 'gainst stores co-operative."
"But stay," I said, "and hear a few words more
Bout state of things which you so much deplore.
Has not for years the public mind believed
That it has been by tradesmen much deceived?
That they have play'd such tricks, if only part
Be true, there's been enough to make men start
Such public companies, to take the place
Of retail shops? To grow at rapid pace,
Do not some keep their goods from day to day
In places moist, to make them heavier weigh?

Their salt and cheese in cellars, from the walls
Of which the damp in steady current falls ;
Water their treacle, selling it as fine
As 'golden syrup,' and, with like design,
Sand too, perhaps, and at a liberal rate,
With sugar mix, about one hundredweight?
This, if you doubt, a pound at *twopence* buy,
And then my statement you will not deny.
The list is long enough, but how much more
Could I not add to make a heavy score?
Does not tobacco take an ample share
Of tradesman's skill and his peculiar care?
And as for lard, when 'tis united well
With cheapest flour, will not the profits swell?
Besides all this, doth e'er his cunning fail
To make him gainer by the turn of scale?"
I paused, while Dempster puzzled seem'd to be,
And said, "You're hard on my fraternity."
"I may be so; but is it not too true,
Although a sorry tale, and one not new?
All this has forced their customers away,
And made their business lessen ev'ry day;
For time was sure to bring with telling force
The means to stop for e'er so wrong a course.
Besides, of late they've started a new trick,
Enough to make the public well-nigh sick!
I mean the dodge of Christmas-box, to win
The cook's best orders, to secure the 'tin.'
Such artful ways are quite enough to floor
The best of trades, and close retailer's door!
So grasping hand and avaricious heart
Have given to public stores their aid to start;
For where can men be found who keep in view
The single trade they were apprenticed to?
Most, it is plain, an envious turn disclose,
And in each other's business poke their nose.

The linen-draper deals in shoes and boots,
Carpets and rugs, and in the varied suits
For growing lads, and dresses ready-made
Of standing colours, never known to fade,
For ladies and domestic servants grand.
The grocer, too, will make his trade expand
With wine and spirits, bottled stout and ale,
His purse to fill and customers regale ;
While others will engage in ev'ry sort
Of business, which they never have been taught.
What wonder, then, that men with incomes small,
With hearty little ones who daily call
For food or raiment, will some method try
By which they can the tricks of trade defy ?
If shopkeepers can ev'ry business take
In hopes that larger profits they may make,
Why should not others with as useful brains
Follow their steps, and share their daily gains ?
Thus 'twill be found, the general public will
Combine, and with a manager of skill
Keep all their custom clear from tradesmen's doors,
And quickly found co-operative stores.
'Tis sad, friend Dempster, that a man like you,
Of good report, for conduct just and true,
Should suffer through a class 'tis fear'd too rife,
In sly, designing ways—but such is life !
And I believe no remedy you'll find,
For surely all may deal where they've a mind !
Free Trade establish'd cannot now be stay'd,
And when men like they will make free to trade."

THE MELLWOODS.

OLD Betty Mellwood, known to most by name,
Deserved the kindest notice—free from blame
She'd pass'd a quiet, inoffensive life,
Devoid of gossip, discontent, and strife.
Her cottage on the upland border placed,
Look'd o'er a vale by Nature's bounty graced,
Replete with verdure, rich with gen'rous soil,
To yield a full return for human toil ;
But there, alas ! had tares too freely grown,
While the good seed had been but rarely sown !
Fruit to produce for everlasting day,
Which all who taste will never know decay.
Throughout that vale so pleasing to the view,
Where many thorns among the wild flow'rs grew,
Poor wand'ring sheep were scatter'd far and wide,
With none to check them, no one near to guide :
Shepherds they wanted, who with zeal would do
Their Master's bidding—" Search the byways through,
Gather together all with anxious care,
That worthy guests My harvest-home may share."
Long toiling years had she discreetly pass'd
Her humble lot 'mong lab'ring people cast,
For sixty years she'd been a faithful wife,
Had known the sorrows and the cares of life ;
James, her old man, a tiller of the soil,
For threescore years and more had seen some toil !
One of a day gone by, in spirit calm
He lived an honest life, and did no harm.
Betty to church had regularly been,
And, saving there, the vicar had not seen
For many a day, for he too old had grown
To seek the poor man's dwelling far and lone,

And as his curate was engaged to preach,
He would not out of church religion teach !
Feeble with age, in years some eighty-five,
She seldom went to church, though she might strive.
The poor they say " make no new friends," or few,
So parsons should to them be ever true.
The quiet dame, contented with her station,
Could never stand what she call'd innovation ;
And all the rapid changes of our age
At times her even temper would enrage.
She often liked to talk of those good times
When first she listen'd to the village chimes,
And poor folks' child got intellectual food
Enough in her belief for its real good,
Enough to make them lead industrious lives,
The boys good workmen, and the girls good wives.
Oft she would say that much reform was vain,
And comment on it in the following strain—
" Lor', sir, for folk in our poor situation
I see no good in so much eddication,
Young lads and lasses now so high and mighty,
So proud and fast and so uncommon flighty,
They be no good for labour whatsoever,
They all of them be scholarsd downright clever ;
As soon as they have left their grand new schools
Think mothers donkeys, and their fathers fools ;
Small girls are women now, and as for boys,
They ape the man before they're hobbleddehoys ;
The former waste their time in writing letters,
The latter trying to outdo their betters.
Behold on Sunday eve the upstart fops,
With counter ladies from the tradesmen's shops,
And servant maids on ev'ry path and turning,
And own that love of dress keeps pace with learning.
The damsels' dresses made for show, not wear,
And overtrimm'd with dazzling colours rare ;

Whilst from their ears the cheapest jewels made
At Birmingham are gaudily display'd !
Methinks it shows a vain and silly cratur,
To think such things improve the work of Natur !
No more is humble cleanly smock-frock seen,
Except on my old man or poor Tim Green.
All, all is changed, and I've no hesitation,
In putting it all down to eddication ;
In short, it's come to such a pretty pass
That very soon there'll be no working class ! "
Betty had never grumbled at her lot,
But e'er was cheerful in her humble cot ;
And though through years she ne'er had means to gain
An easy chair for trembling limbs or pain,
An idle life was hateful to her mind,
And " strikes " with her no favour e'er could find.
Oft would she say, with many a sigh and tear,
" That extra wage was chiefly spent in beer ;
That her poor Sally's husband when he got
More weekly pay became the greater sot,
And beat her tender frame till bruised and sore,
Three times as often as he'd done before !
Through years I never dreamt that I should see
Men use their wives with so much cruelty !
Once would that man who dealt a wilful blow
To one when down, however great a foe,
Have won the name of coward, which would stick
To him for life as mortar does to brick ;
So he who raised his fist against a wife
(Although she might have given cause for strife),
If not insane, was look'd upon at least,
As brutal tyrant or a savage beast ;
Ah me ! they'll find not, wheresoe'er they seek
One like my Jim with his twelve ' bob ' a week ;
Who though no scholard has throughout his day
Pursued a harmless life and paid his way."

In her was virtue sown while yet a child,
Which ripen'd well though rear'd in country wild;
So throughout life, upon a troubled road,
She'd lean'd upon the mercy of her God.
When first I visited the good old soul,
Her gen'rous nature seemed to lose control,
And from her cupboard shelf, as quick as thought,
Refreshment for me, all she had, she brought;
Good, kindly words had she for ev'ry one,
Made no complaint, although at times "felt lone."
Her James was steady, came home ev'ry night,
But still was out, though old, from dawning light
Toiling away! He knew he *must* keep on,
Till all his energies were wholly gone!
So Betty till his daily work was done
Alone would be within her cottage found,
Or in her garden, or allotment ground.
One day, led on by some encouragement,
I ventured questions to a small extent
About her case; and how she held her way
Against the floodtide of the present day.
I ask'd her who her friends and neighbours were,
Who show'd to her the most attentive care
Now age was on and feebleness increased
And pow'r to work her way had nearly ceased.
Her quick reply, in truthful accents said,
Forced me to drop in shame and grief my head.
"So old," she said, "I've outlived ev'ry friend,
And few are found when life is near its end.
No parson has for years approaching ten
Upon this cottage floor put foot; but then
The vicar lives two miles from our lone door,
And age has long declared his duties o'er.
I will not blame so kind and good a man,
But if he cannot come, his curate can.
I go to church at times on aching limb,

With aid of sturdy stick and my old Jim,
So I suppose the curate thinks, alas,
His visits needless, as the seasons pass,
And 'tis enough for sinners now and then
To hear a sermon and commandments ten !
But one fine day an extra curate came
For special duty, Allick was his name—
Our aged vicar's sojourn near its end—
And this strange parson proved the poor man's friend ;
He found neglected souls, and quickly he
Gave best advice and all his sympathy !
The day he left I shed a frequent tear,
And thank'd the Lord for letting him come here."
This able curate was of doctrine sound,
And as a Churchman held the highest ground ;
Right well he knew the poor could not be fed
With bread of life if left unvisited,
So he would find them though he'd miles to go,
And for their greatest need all interest show.
Now, Mr. Allick when the vicar died
Knew all the poor, but only could reside
Three months at Flirton Croft or so at most ;
Still in that time he gather'd friends, a host
Among the poor of ev'ry age and kind,
So warm his heart and so discreet his mind.
He fear'd no patron, sense of duty gave
Aid to his zeal, as he would try to save
The falling ere the day of grace should close,
Heedless of all who would his work oppose !
The truth he held above all things supreme,
Spake it in love, yet made its pow'r his theme ;
So many soon his influence great would own,
Respect his teaching and his aim was won ;
The sceptic would to gospel truth attend,
Admit its value, and his life amend.
He sought the poor in their neglected state,

And brought true comfort to the desolate,
Gave them some knowledge of religious truth,
Which most had scarcely heard of from their youth,
His utmost strove to win both young and old
From scattered paths, to seek the one true fold.
A heathen land in Flirton Croft he found,
Where uncheck'd vice its poison spread around,
Men unconfirm'd, and children unbaptized,
No tongue can tell what there he realised.
But he would not let Satan's pow'r delay
His work to bring into salvation's way
The harden'd sinner, careless sheep astray.
Great good resulted ; all were made to feel
That Heaven had bless'd the good man's holy zeal ;
That special grace of Providence had one
Like Allick sent, to save a place so gone
From holiness, so lost to pastoral care,
So reckless made, and wasting in despair.
There had he found a thorough wilderness,
But soon he raised it from the worst distress,
And with a firm yet ever gentle hand
Had been a faithful guide to promised land,
To rich and poor, to humble folk and great,
To selfish worldly minds, and profligate !
With him a gentle and devoted wife,
Unheeding trouble, jealousy, or strife,
Worked with a loving will, from day to day,
Careless of health and strength, e'en life's decay,
With zeal unflagging, yet no praise she won
For deeds of love and Christian duty done,
Nay, rather calumny, reproach, and scorn
For seeking poverty and souls forlorn—
The worn of time, the weak and destitute,
Neglected plants that yielded little fruit.
Hers was a heart could " weep with those that weep,"
As she would urge her Master's wandering sheep

From path of sin to that which leads to heaven,
Through the good tidings in His gospel given.
Too short her day ! Too soon the envious grave
Deprived the poor of sympathy she gave.
Yet *there* they'll come with grateful heart to prove
With silent requiems their depth of love !
A life like hers could not be spent in vain,
Her death, so deeply mourn'd, to her was gain.
Her soul in Abraham's bosom will repose,
Till the last trump shall call the just, and those
That sleep in Jesus, to the realms of bliss,
To joy which none can tell in world like this.
But some would not let Allick's efforts win
Immortal souls from lowest depths of sin.
Some "great ones" made his place too hot to hold,
And fiercely drove the shepherd from his fold !
And why ? Because while he the sin-bound slave
Taught living faith in Jesus Christ would save ;
That one pure Church He founded with His love,
No pow'r of earth or Satan could remove,
A Church 'gainst which all enemies would fail,
For with it truth eternal must prevail !
Because he held *that* Church by grace Divine
Was still a living branch of one true Vine,
And would not let its pure and hallow'd field
The tares of heresy and schism yield.
Because he put a most decided stop
To Nonconformists meddling with his crop,
And show'd to many evidence complete
That much of schism sprang from mere conceit ;
For how could men who knew no ancient tongue
Instruct the ignorant and teach the young ?
As the rich Ethiop found his reading vain
"Except some one should guide" him or explain
The solemn mysteries in Scripture given,
How can the poor discern the way to heaven,

Unless they can in their seclusion find
Some sound instructor to direct the mind ?
How can they gather purest wisdom, when
They've none to teach them but unlearned men ?
What wonder that Dissent becomes so free,
And sweeps the road to infidelity,
When Catholic Church of no account is thought,
Her creeds ignored, her hist'ry left untaught.
I doubt if ten, th' extensive parish through
Of Flirton Croft, knew aught of doctrine true,
Till Allick took its people to his care,
And gave instruction with devotion there.
Hence the good man before the vicar died
Knew all the poor, but only could reside
Some few weeks more within the parish bound—
Unwelcome news, producing grief profound !
Too soon the time approach'd with quick'ning pace
For him to leave the renovated place,
And many a tear-drop fell o'er wrinkled face.
Soon were subscriptions raised 'mong lab'ring poor
By pence—some little token to procure
For their kind friend—some little gift to prove
How he had gained their gratitude and love,
While humble hearts would never cease to pray
For his well-being upon life's rough way.
The gift bestow'd, the station's warning bell
The time for leaving told. A long farewell
Was given by many with a tearful eye,
Who watch'd him leaving as the train pass'd by.

YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION.

TOM BITTON kept provision stores, and he,
From his own statement, had been fast and free ;
For many years the daily life he led
Was one of pleasure, to religion dead ;
But since he'd been converted he would say
" His time was ever passed in virtue's way.
His leisure moments he would freely give
To teach his poorer neighbours how to live,
And for that end designed an institution
Requiring little help, with resolution,
To bring its lovely form to perfect state,
And Flirton Croft to fame and honour great."
At once he took sweet counsel of a few
Who could, he thought, promote the end in view.
Bring with rare speed his pious views to pass,
And soundest knowledge to the labouring class.
Bitton, who'd ta'en his full allowance of beer,
Without the *slightest check* for many a year,
Was now so altered, he could only think
That malt and hops produced the drunkard's drink.
In jokes, though innocent, no more he dealt,
His mouth look'd as if butter 'twould not melt ;
And as for doing aught on Sabbath day,
He'd sell no milk till Sunday passed away,
Nor cows on day of rest would tend, if he
Could feel assured he would no loser be !
Now Bitton, having put in shape his plan,
Commenced a canvass with a *leading* man.
Said he, " I'm sure you'll join, good neighbour Penn,
Th' Association for young Christian men ?
'Tis pious work, so pray do all you can
To aid my cause as a committee man ;

Success as yet has pass'd my expectations ;
Dear Christian friends of all denominations
Proffer their help in many useful ways.
'Go on,' they say, 'and all will sound your praise.'
Look at my list, the first is Farmer Daw,
A right good-thinking man, though one of *straw*,
He ne'er has money, that's his only flaw ;
We look on him as quite a rising man,
A shining light, and quite a Bunyan ;
The *pilgrim's progress* he knows how to steer,
And keep the carnal man from mischief clear."
Quoth Penn, "Now take the next upon your list,
'Tis my most worthy neighbour, Nathan Twist,
Devout and steady, very free from guile,
I cannot tell when last I saw him smile.
His ancestors were Quakers stiff and strong,
His mother to the Baptists did belong,
His father Nonconformist firm did live,
And *this* dear friend has turn'd a Primitive ;
Thus is he one of a religious stock,
The very man, you'll say, to watch the flock.
And who is this," said Penn, "you call John Twill,
Some post important you would wish to fill ?"
"Oh," replied Bitton, "local preacher late,
Up in the North, somewhere near Harrogate ;
He can expound right well without mistake ;
The heaviest sleeper he is sure to wake.
He scares the men and makes the women cry ;
The dust from out his cushion, don't it fly ?"
Penn would not join. Said he, 'Tis my belief
The scheme will soon, friend Nathan, come to grief ;
For its success you doubtless must secure
Men to be leaders who can means procure ;
Without them, be assured, the scheme won't do,
And all the world will have its laugh at you.
Now, just consider well 'bout neighbour Daw ;

For years he'd have his drop or two, and more,
And in the last twelve months, in broad daylight,
I've seen him struggle home uncommon 'tight ;'
'Twas well-known, too, for some saw plain enough,
How he roll'd scrambling o'er his cattle trough.
Then, what of Twist ? a sober man 'tis true,
But, then, he's known as a tremendous screw :
One who would skin a flint or starve a kitten
Is not the best example, neighbour Bitton.
To work as leaders you must surely find
Those who at least possess a gen'rous mind.
To start with such weak names would be a pity ;
You can't get on without a good committee.
So then, friend Bitton, I must plainly say
To your request, though with reluctance, nay."
They parted friends, and Bitton, homeward bound,
Met Squire Lickem near the parish pound—
A downright man, and as he once had been
In royal navy, he full share had seen
Of human nature, and would never stand
The slightest humbug upon sea or land.
"Permit me, sir," said Bitton to the squire
(Raising his wide-awake a little higher
Than it was wont), "to hope our cause you've read,
The way of life before the poor to spread,
To bring our reckless, ever-erring youth
To hear the *Word* explain'd, and gospel truth
To clearly place before the darken'd eye.
Aid for such work, dear sir, you'll not deny.
Meetings there'll be on ev'ry Saturday night,
When holy men will preach what *they* think right.
Allow us, then, to hope our ranks you'll join."
"Not if I know it ; 'tis not in my line,"
Replied old Lickem ; adding, "How could he
Who pray'd in church against all heresy,
Aid in promulgating both here and there

Doctrines unsound with many a fatal snare?
Good afternoon! At home they'll think me lost,
And all my letters will be late for post."
But Bitton, nothing daunted, kept his way,
And brought his plans to work without delay.
Farmers and tradesmen a committee form'd,
And all into their places quickly warm'd;
They soon secur'd the village reading-room,
Rich with tobacco's comforting perfume,
And all look'd forward with intense delight
And much devotion for the opening night.
It came; and long before the hour drew near
For speech or sermon, many throng'd to hear,
While some assembled there for jolly spree,
And some from simple curiosity.
Then came an essay upon elocution,
Next was a paper read 'gainst absolution;
Then Bitton rose with self-sufficient air,
'Mid welcome cheers re-echoed from the chair,
To give his lecture upon "Hope and Fear."
"Hope," he remark'd, "was borne on golden wings,
While fear required continued leading strings.
When once *converted* nothing them could harm,
For hope would e'er prevail to soothe and charm,
While fear would cease to harass or alarm."
The lecture done, and thanks, with grace, proposed
To him who fill'd the chair, the business closed.
Dispersing, some went homewards straight to sup,
But most to public-house to "liquor up."
Soon fierce report was spread, as hot as thick,
That "Charlock" had been play'd a dirty trick:
For though a preacher good, and popular
With all the working people near and far,
He'd ne'er been ask'd by any to belong
To the association—sure 'twas wrong,
As Harry Charlock was a Methodist strong.

His chief admirers soon with main and might
Press'd the committee for a special night
That he might with his eloquence downright
Exound the truth, and in his happiest mood
Point out to all the way that leads to good.
Charlock's warm friends show'd such a firm intent,
For their especial night they gain'd consent.
A night was fix'd, and neighbours kind turn'd out
In force to hear a Flirtencroftian spout—
One known to be a most industrious man—
Ready to work as soon as day began.
He now and then "Bethesda's" pulpit fill'd,
And lukewarm hearts he very quickly thrill'd.
No great *divine* ! still he was quite a gem
Among his followers, and divine to them.
He look'd on trouble with a cheerful view,
Good was his heart, and good he tried to do.
In leisure moments on the sabbath day
He would the Bible read to some, and pray
With those who could not read, so on sick bed
Suffring and sad would hear the Scripture read.
The time appointed came for his discourse,
Which he commenced with most effective force
At crowded meeting—all came there to hear,
And not to lark or giggle, hiss or sneer.
And many there were neighbours kind and true,
His text, Saint Matthew, chapter twenty-two,
Verse thirty-nine, providing theme the best
For such an audience as he then address'd,
No Spurgeon had more thoughtful congregation,
As Charlock spake as follows, with persuasion.
"Love for one's neighbour ! Who would not possess
Such in this world of trouble and distress ?
Love for ourselves we have an ample share
For ever with us, and a deal to spare.
But do we love our neighbour as ourselves ?

As sure as dust collects on them there shelves,
As sure as here's a table, there a lot
Of forms and chairs to sit on, we have not.
Can you, employers, love poor working men?
And only give them wage, perhaps, from ten
To twelve 'bob' weekly! Is attention shown
To them in age and when they're feeble grown?
And can you say, from bottom of the heart,
You ne'er to them have play'd a selfish part,
Have never let your cattle or your sheep
Stray o'er allotment crops and make clean sweep,
And then refuse in every kind of way
Some compensation for the loss to pay?
As sure as eggs is eggs, and pelf is pelf,
Think you this loving neighbour as one's self?
If any act like this, I humbly call
Him to reflect, for 'tis no love at all.
Love to your neighbour! Mark! oh, mark that love,
Which acts of generosity should prove.
Mark that, I pray you, fellow Christians, mark."
As he proceeded thus, electric spark
From his bright eloquence intensely strong
Caus'd an explosion in th' excited throng,
'Mid cries of "Bravo" spread the crowd among.
Up rose the scared committee there and then,
Who roar'd out, "Order, order, gentlemen!"
But though with gestures wild they roar'd and roar'd
Peace was not for a length of time restor'd.
Soon as a lull return'd, Old Grubb cried, "List,
I'll ask you simple question, neighbour Twist.
Some fifty of your starving sheep would eat
My little crops of barley and of wheat—
This you know well. Now, do you mean to stir, man,
And pay me what is just? You've heard the sermon,
You, who would lead and guide the young men right,
Will you spoil old man's store, and not requite?"

Be an example first of love and truth,
And then begin your *work* for saving youth."
The storm broke out afresh ; Twist's face grew pale
As his skimm'd milk thrown into wat'ry pail,
While Daw and Bitton turn'd as beetroot red
Straight from the confines of a forcing bed—
All look'd speechless unutterable things,
And homeward flew as if on swallow wings.
Great was the tumult, fast the uproar spread ;
In vain the chairman shook his scarecrow head,
Then, with an effort fit to make him sick,
Squeez'd through the crowd, and "cut his lucky stick."
And just in time, as soon the sequel prov'd :
The ancient reading-room was plainly mov'd,
So great a weight as then upon its floor
It never had experienc'd before.
Short was the warning ! Soon a fearful crash
Astounded all, so terrible the smash.
The floor had yielded as the weight rebounded,
Making confusion there the "more confounded."
There Baptists, Primitives, and Ranters lay—
Some face to face, and some the "t'other way."
A varied lot, short, tall, or thin and stout,
"Jumpers" were there, but they could not jump out.
Sad was their case, but sadder the reflections,
How many struggling there with *New Connections* !
Whate'er they might have been before the fall,
Then, without doubt, they were *Dissenters* all.
Well might they feel quite overcome with woe,
As they had fallen to the shades below !
Few fear'd the worst—the room was near to earth—
Not far to fall, but 'twas no pleasant berth.
Some had retreated as soon as hint went round,
"The old worm-eaten floor was quite unsound."
Still, "elders" grandly seated in the centre,
Within the cellar were compell'd to enter ;

While all the "staff" and great "committee-men,"
Like angry lions growl'd in one close den.
Neighbours arriv'd, and very soon began
To raise the fallen sinners, man by man ;
The doctor came, when all were glad to find,
Except some cuts before and wounds behind,
There was no damage of a serious kind.

Thus came to grief, in manner most uncouth,
"Th' association for poor Christian youth."
Thus, with events most strange the world is rife,
There's no romance, or fiction, like real life.

The End.

